Divine Life

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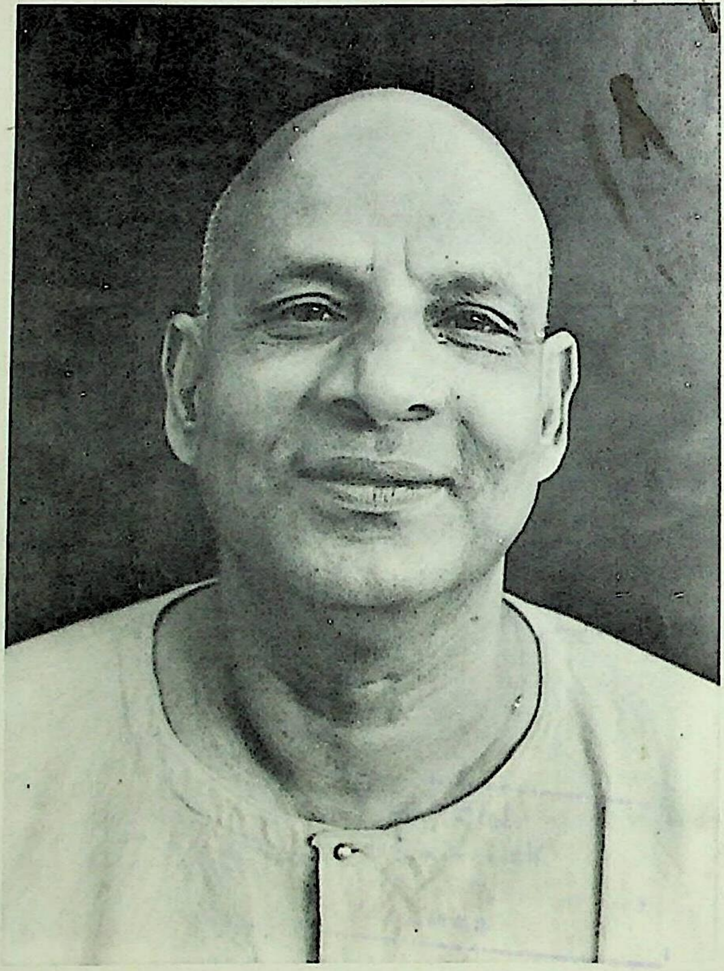

When one Soul dwells in all living beings, then why do you hate others? Why do you sneer and frown at others? Why do you use harsh words? Why do you try to rule and domineer over others? Why do you exploit others? Why are you intolerant? Is this not the height of folly? Is this not sheer ignorance?

—Sivananda

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Two Became One

I sat alone on a block of stone
On the banks of the Ganges;
Mother Ganga blessed me;
I meditated on Om and its meaning;
The word that is the symbol of Brahman.
The little personality was lost;
The mortal limit of the self was loosened;
But there was infinite extension,
I entered into the nameless beyond;
I realised the quintessential unity of bliss.
No words can describe the thrill of joy,
The supreme and divine heights of felicity;
The little 'I' fused into the incandescent brilliance;
Two became one alone,
One mass of transcendental light-bliss—
So Says Sivananda.

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OVERCOME ARROGANCE

SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA

The Sanskrit word for arrogance is "Darpa". Arrogance is undue assumption of importance. Arrogance is claiming proudly and unduly. It is a mixture of Rajasic and Tamasic egoism, insolence, rudeness, overbearing nature and impertinence or impudence. It is a modification of egoism. It is egoism itself and is born of ignorance.

A man behaves insolently towards an elderly man, treats him with contempt, sneers at him and speaks disrespectful words. This is arrogance.

Another man throws a book or a notebook in front of a person in anger and utters vulgar words. This is arrogance.

Another says in anger, "Don't you know who I am? I will break your jaw. I will break your skull. I will break your teeth. I will drink your blood." This is arrogance.

One says to another, "I cannot be dictated to by anybody. I have my own ways. Nobody can question me about anything. I cannot dance to the tune of others. Why should I go to them? Why should I follow their instructions? Are they more learned than me? Who are they after all? Who are they to order me? Who are they to question me?" All this is arrogance.

Generally, a thoughtless man who is not practising introspection and self-analysis says, "I have no arrogance at all. I am humble, gentle and kind." But when the test comes, he fails hopelessly and miserably a thousand and one times. Such is the force and strength of arrogance.

An aspirant is very good. He is very intelligent. He is a learned man. He delivers lectures. He meditates silently in a solitary room for hours together. And yet he is not free from arrogance. When a man goes against his sweet will or wish, when a man speaks ill of him or criticises, when he is not respected, he becomes arrogant and behaves very rudely.

Watch your thoughts, words and actions carefully. Know the power of words and use them cautiously. Respect all. Speak sweet and measured words. Be mild. Cultivate patience, love, humility and tolerance. Enquire. Observe silence. Again and again think: "This world is unreal. What will I gain by being arrogant?" Think of the immense benefits of the opposite virtue of humility.

You may fail a hundred times. But again stand up and strengthen your resolve. Gradually your will-force will develop and you will conquer arrogance, the enemy of peace, devotion and wisdom.

With all your care and vigilance, arrogance will hiss and raise its hood several times daily. Raise the rods of discrimination and humility and slay it. Arrogance is a myriad-headed monster or Asura. It will again develop more heads even though you chop them off again and again. Continue the battle with greater vigour, force and strength. Use combined methods like prayer and meditation, enquiry and Brahmacharya, self-restraint, Japa, Kirtan and Pranayama. Take recourse to the Yoga of Synthesis. Arrogance will be burnt *in toto* and reduced to ashes.

If an arrogant man remains in a cave or in a room, there is no scope for him to eradicate this evil quality. It will lurk in his mind and harass him. An aspirant should mix with people of different mentality and temperament and then watch his thoughts when he is ill-treated, disrespected and persecuted. If he is calm, serene and humble even under the worst of trying conditions, know that he has eradicated this terrible foe.

The more the learning, the more the arrogance. The higher the position, the greater the arrogance. The more the wealth, the more the arrogance.

A man may renounce his wife, children, property, position and wealth. He may renounce the world and live in a cave in the Himalayas for several years practising Yoga, and yet he finds it difficult to renounce arrogance. He does not know what he is exactly doing. He repents afterwards when he gives vent to this evil trait. Impulse is the motive force to make one arrogant.

An egoistic and arrogant man is easily upset by trifling things. As his heart is filled with pride and vanity, a little disrespect or harsh word or mild rebuke or censure throws him out of his balance. He hates others on account of wounded vanity. He behaves arrogantly towards them. Seeing God in all and developing humility will eradicate arrogance completely.

May God bless you with strength and wisdom to overcome arrogance and enjoy eternal bliss.

The Richest Man

SRI SWAMI OMKAR

Who is the richest man in the world? The desireless man, the selfless man, is the richest man in all creation.

Give, give, give. That which you hold will turn to dust; give while you live, for give you must; else what you hold tightly in your hands will vanish through your fingers and be lost. Give, and there will flow a mighty fountain through the hand.

What is that by knowing which everything is known? First seek ye His Kingdom and righteousness and all these shall be added unto ye. By knowing God or Truth you will be the richest man in all the world. By seeking God's Kingdom first, you will be the king of all the worlds, the richest man in all creation.

I always feel from within that the selfish man, the ignorant man who lives for himself is the cause of all the trouble in the country and in the world, both in the East and West, even for the world wars in the past or the present or the future. By his selfishness, running after the evanescent toys of the world, being a slave of the fleeting clouds of name and fame, he is converting heaven into hell, all for his vanity.

The fame and glory of the selfish man is like that of a blade of dry grass or a withering flower. Where are the mighty and cruel war-mongers now, who were the cause of the death of millions of innocent people? The Kingdom of Heaven belongs to the childlike, to the pure and trusting. So let us cling to God more than running after the material things of the passing world. Let us aspire to reach the goal of our precious human birth before the light goes out any day. Not our will but may His Will be done for the good of all, for God alone knows what is good for each and everyone of us, as well as for each nation.

My heart longs to share with you the immortal wealth, the imperishable riches that cannot be stolen by thieves or rusted by the passing of time, which give you peace of mind, the goal of this precious human birth. It is desire that binds. Give up desire and you will be sitting on the throne of contentment in the Kingdom of Heaven here and now.

To begin with, knowing the precariousness of human birth, one must wish, pine and aspire with all the strength of his mind, heart and soul to realise God before the call in the form of death comes. Regular study of the scriptures, be it *Gita* or Bible or any of your religious books, even for fifteen minutes everyday will be helpful for your spiritual progress.

As the scriptures say, this body is given only for service. So let us serve His children by spreading peace from heart to heart, by making them repeat the *Peace Prayer*, as it helps to feel God's Presence while repeating itself.

As it is the individual peace that paves the way towards universal peace, by establishing peace in our hearts and spreading it near and far, we are really contributing to the peace of the world.

Let the peace thought—peace within and without, peace everywhere and all around us—be more prominent than the thoughts of fear, strife, bitterness and war. May all be peaceful everywhere.

Due to wrong association with wrong people who are running after the fleeting clouds of name and fame, the ignorant man neglects the peace within and runs after the peace without—like sheep—forgetting the Divinity, the roaring lion within itself. O man! Wake up! It is high time to start a peace centre within yourself from where alone peace should flow ceaselessly in torrents and rivers.

Peace Prayer: Adorable Presence, Thou who art within and without, above and below and all around, Thou who art interpenetrating the very cells of our beings, Thou who art the Eye of our eyes, the Ear of our ears, the Heart of our hearts, the Mind of our minds, the Breath of our breaths, the Life of our lives and the Soul of our souls, bless us, Dear God, to be aware of Thy Presence *now* and *here*. That is all that we ask of Thee.

May all of us be aware of Thy Presence in the east and the west, in the north and the south. May peace and goodwill abide among individuals as well as communities and nations. This is our earnest prayer. May peace be unto all.

It is very easy to start a peace centre within yourself. Here there is no need of paying monthly dues or yearly donations. All that you have to do is only to shift your centre from without to within. Now is the time and this is the place wherever you may be. Today is ours and not the uncertain tomorrow. Let us do our good deeds today only, nay, at this moment alone, by establishing peace centres in our hearts in the present living moment—*now*—for the peace of our souls and for the good of humanity.

City of Benightedness

SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA

This phenomenal world is a realm of sense perceptions. The mind and the senses are extremely deceptive and unreliable and therefore all appearances and experiences perceived through them are totally misleading and dangerously deluding. All things seemingly appear to be going one way but turn out to be quite different later on. The painful puts on the garb of the pleasant, whereas the evil masquerades beneath goodness. This is the inscrutable game of Maya. One who deeply reflects upon this and understands it well walks on the path of light. He who succumbs to this deception comes to dwell in the 'City of Benightedness' and leads a precarious life that lands him into endless trouble. Real blessedness lies in the Self. The sense-world constitutes the direct antitheses or total contradiction of the Self. In the Self alone abide eternal life and lasting bliss, whereas sensual indulgence is a poison that destroys life. Listen to this interesting story.

There was once a wandering monk and his disciple. The monk was wise and vigilant. The young disciple was impetuous and at times foolhardly, due to his love of pleasure. During their wanderings they once arrived at the city of a king named Rajarajeshwar Brihat-moodh Bahadur. The city was called Andhernagari. Putting up at a rest-house, the Guru sent the disciple to purchase some food-stuffs from the bazaar for their frugal meal. The disciple went but soon returned dancing in glee, loaded with a great bagful of eatables, sweets and fruits of endless variety. The Guru asked him what all this meant. The disciple replied, "O Guruji! We should settle here permanently. This city is heaven on earth. Here the price of anything and everything is uniformly *one pice per seer*. Anything under the sun that you require, from a pin or needle to silk and velvet or gold and gems, costs but one pice per seer. For a few annas we both can live the luxurious life of a king. Let us remain here till the end of our life."

No sooner the Guru heard this than he at once rolled up his deer skin, tucked up his loin-cloth and, taking his staff and bowl, came out of the rest-house on to the open road. Addressing his disciple he said, "Let us leave this sinister place at once, O disciple! This is not heaven. It is Satan's own city. Come, tarry not a moment longer in this city of darkness. Each single second that you delay will endanger your very life. Where everything is almost free for the mere asking there life has verily turned topsy-turvy. Pleasure here will soon turn to dire danger and your smiles will give place to bitter tears. Come, let us leave this place at once."

The smile disappeared from the face of the disciple. He became vexed and disappointed at the prospect of missing this feast of pleasurable indulgence offered by the 'pice-per-seer' commodities of Andhernagari. His rosy dream-palaces were coming trembling to the ground. He pleaded with the Guru to remain, urging him that nothing but joy would result from such a happy life, getting all things for a mere song and enjoying without much trouble or exertion. The Guru was earnest, serious and adamant. The disciple saw this and suddenly decided to break off from the Guru and remain in this paradise of milk and curd, fruits and sweets. Where else could one ever hope to get such a chance? Thus he thought within his foolish self and told the Guru, "All right, if thou will go, go. I choose to remain in this city though you don't."

"Be it so," the Guru replied, and with a final warning, he left the disciple and the city.

Thus the disciple came to settle down in Andhernagari, the 'City of Benightedness', where everything could be had for the mere asking, as it were. So cheap were things that an anna a day would suffice for a man to eat, drink and live in royal style. The disciple's life was one round of joy daily. He could eat to his heart's content. He could easily get whatever things desire dictated and procure all that his senses craved for. Thus the five senses and the mind had their sense-demands satisfied even before they could arise. He had only to collect a few annas, which he easily did within half an hour by wandering into the well-to-do locality each morning. He gorged himself with tasty delicacies, regaled himself with fine perfumes and an occasional flower garland. His lips were ever crimson with the juice of fragrantly spiced betel leaves and nuts. He looked quite distinguished in a silken gown and smart orange-coloured turban. In the room which he came to occupy at the Dharmasala, there was a fine cot (cheap at two annas, including cartage), with a soft bedstead upon it. A fine 'hukka' with polished silver decorative bands stood upon a stool made of carved ebony. There was a nice carpet on the floor too.

Thus passed five years. The disciple had the doorway widened somewhat since he first came to this room with his Guru. Good living had made him put on considerable flesh and he was now quite thick-set and bulky. He forgot his devotion to his Guru, he forgot what he was and was only intent upon enjoying the maximum pleasures in this wonderful city, where he could get everything he wanted or wished for. Thus days, months and years passed on smoothly in a stream of ease and enjoyment of sensual pleasures. He eventually grew fat, gross and sensual.

While the disciple lived thus, things in this great topsy-turvy city went on as usual in their mad way. The minister was a fool of the highest order. He was excelled only by his master, the king. The law of the land was of an extraordinary brand. The judges and law-givers vied with the king and the minister.

In this wonderful city one day there occurred an accident. A man was passing along a narrow roadway by the side of a newly constructed wall. As he was passing, the wall collapsed and a portion of it fell upon the man and injured him. He at once lodged a complaint to the magistrate against the owner of the wall. The day happened to be a Friday and it was the practice of the king to hold open court on all Fridays after 10 a.m. So cases occurring between 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. were taken directly before the king. Thus the injured man's complaint was referred to the open court, directly before the king. The trembling owner of the house was hauled up before him.

His Majesty: Now then, the wall belongs to you?

Owner: Yes, my king.

King: Come, what have you to say? Why should you not be punished for the injury suffered by this man?

Owner: O Sarkar! Though I own it, I know nothing about the wall. It was built entirely by a contractor who alone is responsible for its standing or its falling.

"Catch hold of the contractor and get him here at once!" roared the king.

Thus the guards were at once despatched and soon the wretched contractor was brought before the court.

"Man!" thundered His Majesty.

The minister smiled in approbation.

King: Your wall fell and injured one of my subjects. What have you to say now before I send you to the gallows?

Contractor: Doubtless I contracted the deal, my great king. But I

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pledge that it was the mason who really built the entire wall. He did the whole job. If he did it well, all would have been well. He did it ill and hence it fell and caused injury.

The king was pleased with the contractor. He vigorously shook his head up and down and said, "Yes, yes, you are right, my man. Go to the royal kitchen and have a drink of buttermilk." Turning to the guard: "Go at once, hunt out and fetch me the mason."

The guards found the mason repairing a broken bridge. They swooped upon him suddenly and without the slightest warning caught him by the scruff of his neck and hurried him into the court before the king.

"Speak up for yourself before I hang you by the neck!" roared the king in a terrible voice. "Vile mason, slayer of my subjects (here the king showered a tear and blew his nose), builder of tottering walls, how dare you commit such an atrocity?"

The mason gulped and rubbed his throat with his left hand. He was an elderly man with grey hair. He knew he was in a very bad situation, but luckily he had heard of the king's wisdom. He said, "Your Majesty, the fault is not mine. The mortar that went into the wall was not properly mixed and thus the work of the wall was not very satisfactory."

"Who is the mortar mixer?" asked the king in an ominous tone.

The mason heaved a sigh of relief. He made haste to reply, "O my wise king! The mortar mixer was a man called Buddhu Singh Gadbadi."

Now the court guards were getting wiser and knew what was coming next. So, before the king could turn to them, they were off and after a feverish search located Buddhu Singh, who was at that time partially drunk. Drunk or not drunk, the king wanted him and so the guards hauled him from his bottle to the court. Buddhu Singh wanted to shake hands with the king and the ministers. The guards had a hard time to make him understand that this was not done. Buddhu Singh could not see any sense in it. Ultimately, one of the guards had to administer a clout on his head. This sobered him a little.

"Why did you not mix the mortar well?" asked the king in a stern voice.

Buddhu Singh blinked and replied, "What mortar?"

The minister intervened here and said, pointing to the mason, "The mortar which you mixed for mason Akkal-lal."

Buddhu Singh was startled when he heard the name of the mason.

He seemed to have recollected something. He looked at the mason steadily and then howled out, "Huzur Sarkar, this man owes me two rupees and a half. He asked for it and I lent it. He borrowed it and has never returned it."

"Fool!" roared the king, "do not talk of your money matters. Tell me about the mortar."

Buddhu Singh found himself where he was. He asked, "What mortar?"

Now the court was where it started. When the whole matter was explained with date, place, time and other particulars to the tipsy man, it at last entered his befuddled brain and he said, "Sarkar, in the name of my grandmother tell me how on earth I could mix my mortar properly when the rascal who was to supply me with water from the nearby tap across the street was the most atrocious idiot.

"He delayed and dallied for I know not why. Never did he in time the water supply. Thus the mixture was either too wet or too dry or not ready when the mason wanted it."

The king was getting angry. The court was getting late. His dinner was delayed and yet the man to be hung did not seem easy to hit upon. Everyone seemed to have a perfect case, but justice must be done and a vigorous hunt was made for the water conveyor. His name was Macku Plastri and he lived in the outskirts of the town. He was very fond of music and he played upon a country-made flute. When he was caught, he was watering his garden with a leather bag. So he came to the court with the bag hanging by his side, dripping water.

"Take him to the gallows!" shouted the king.

The minister applauded. But the next moment the king said, "Wait a minute. Let us ask the criminal a question. Why did you dally and delay water and foul the mortar mixture of Buddhu Singh?"

Macku Plastri replied, "I am not to blame, O great king. I had to get the water from across the street and as I was getting it, a dancing girl was singing a beautiful tune from her balcony. I am fond of music, so I stopped to listen. My leather bag is very leaky and as I listened to the song of the prostitute, all the water leaked out of the bag. If the prostitute did not sing from her balcony, I would have been prompt and proper in my duty."

"Release the man," ordered the king. "Go and get the prostitute."

And thus it happened that while the prostitute was in her dressing room platting her hair, the guards summoned her immediately to the court.

"Wretched woman," the king asked, "why do you sing from your balcony?"

The prostitute was frightened out of her wits and could think of no proper answer to the query. She was forthwith ordered to be executed and the guards hurried her to the gallows. Its work now finished, the court rose.

The courtesan now stood on the gallows. The hangman's noose was lowered over her head. The unfortunate woman was half dead with terror. But an extraordinary situation now cropped up. The lady was slender and thin. The hangman's noose was too big. It was many times oversize for her slender and small neck. Consternation prevailed. All the officials at the gallows were perturbed. How to do the hanging now? This was the question that agitated their minds. A man was sent post-hate to the minister. The minister was at his bath. He slided from the bathroom, wrapped up in a Turkish towel, and placed the matter before the king, who was at his dinner. The king was just eating an 'imirthi' at the moment. He flourished his right royal gesture and ordered the minister: "Go! Convey my command at once that if this woman's neck is too small for the hanging noose, let them find a person of proper size to fit it and then do the hanging."

The minister withdrew. The king turned to the queen. She was a fat lady with very big teeth and had a great liking for butter and sweets.

"Look, my dear, all my subjects, from bottom to top, are perfect fools," the king said, and continued to attend to the 'imirthi'.

The king's order was conveyed to the group at the gallows. They at once released the prostitute and told her to run away home after warning her about singing from the balcony.

Guards were at once sent to look for a man of sizeable proportions to fit the noose. Two of the guards happened to pass by the Dharmasala where the disciple was put up. The disciple had just had a sumptuous dinner and was sitting in the open verandah in the sunlight, picking his teeth. His eyes had a far-away look, for he was contemplating what he could have for supper. Also he was musing over the necessity of a comfortable nap just then. The guards espied him. Here was their man, well-fed, sleek and a fat enough neck to take on the noose to a nicety. With an exultant hurrah they rushed upon him and unceremoniously dragged him from the verandah to the street and hurried him along. The disciple loudly protested, remonstrated and pleaded, but to no avail. He was taken up and deposited on the gallows. Thoroughly frightened, he asked what they wanted to do with him. The magistrate on the spot replied, "You have got to be hanged."

Disciple: Why, I have done nothing.

Magistrate: But what is that to us? The man was injured and the culprit is to be hanged.

"But I am not the culprit," cried the disciple.

"But then you are the proper size. She was too small for the noose. As you fit it perfectly, up you go. You have got to dangle."

And the court poet, who was also the part time court jester, said:

Be you the culprit or be you no,
To join the majority you have got to go;
However much you may harangue and wrangle,
It is finally settled that you have got to dangle.

Now it was that the disciple remembered his good Guru's grave and serious warning: "O disciple! This is Satan's own city. Pleasure here will soon turn to dire danger and thy smiles will give place to bitter tears."

He now wept bitterly. He trembled in terror and sweat broke upon his forehead and flowed down his neck. He was in agony and cried: "O Master! Save me! Oh! Why did I disobey you? Why did I eat and grow fat in this city of darkness? I forgot why I originally came and joined my Guru. I forgot that true discipleship meant obedience to the Guru and a life of self-control. The attraction of enjoyment made me disobey my Guru's good advice. I did not heed his warning. I forgot my duty of renunciation, abstinence and self-control. I succumbed to the call of the senses and to the dictates of my pleasure-loving mind. I lived a life of immoderation and excess. I gave up my Sadhana. I did not do my duty. For the sake of my pleasure and self-will, I broke away from my Guru. Now this is the result. Retribution has overtaken me. O God! What am I to do?"

Thus he lamented and wailed out bitterly.

Now there was a sudden stir in the crowd around the gallows. Someone pushed through to the front, crying out: "Stop! Stop!"

The hangman paused for a moment. A stately figure, a Sannyasin with matted locks, mounted up the gallows and stood by the side of the disciple. It was the Guru. A man of intuition, he suddenly came to know from far away that his erring disciple was in grave danger. He had immediately hurried post-hate to the city and arrived at the gallows at the critical moment.

The disciple now interrupted, saying, "No, no, no! Don't do it.

Hang me. Be quick!" But the Guru would not listen. He insisted upon taking the noose. The hangman was helpless. He looked at the magistrate and asked, "What is all this?"

But no one was listening to them, for the Guru and the disciple were engaged in a hot argument, each demanding that he be hanged, and refusing to give place to the other. This was an extraordinary situation. It was beyond the magistrate's comprehension. Once again fresh messengers hurried to the king. The matter was so extraordinary that the king himself now came in person to witness the situation. He demanded to know from the Guru why he wanted to hang himself.

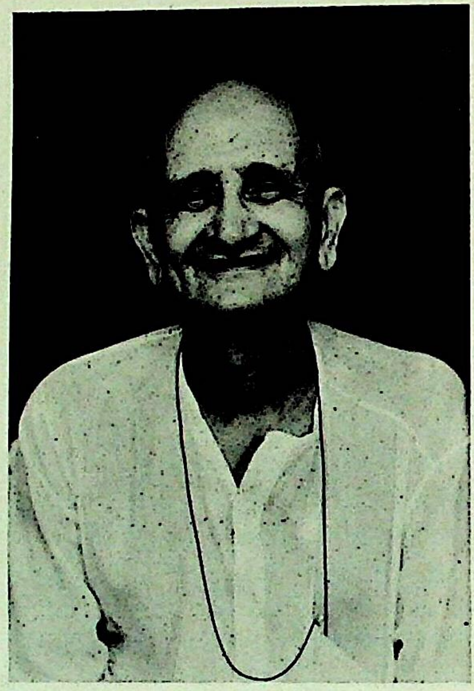
The Guru at first seemed unwilling to tell him, but when the king insisted, he said, "My dear king, there is a very good reason for my wish. I am an expert and past master in Hindu astrology. I have come to know through my accurate calculation that there is an extraordinarily auspicious Muhurta at this time of day, and that the person who dies during this Muhurta at this particular point of latitude and longitude where the gallows are situated, and in this noose, that person will become the supreme emperor of this entire land in his immediate next birth. I want to become an emperor. Therefore, I have hurried with great haste to be in time at this spot. Well, you have the reason. Now let me be hanged, quick, before the Muhurta passes away."

The king grew indignant. "Preposterous!" he cried. "You fellow! You to become the emperor? What audacity! What cheek! It is I who have to be the emperor. I shall be hanged now."

So saying, Rajarajeshwar Brihat-moodh Bahadur slipped his head into the noose. There was great pandemonium. The Guru grasped the disciple by the hand and they both quickly hurried away from the spot, and walking fast, soon reached the outskirts of the city. The disciple was saved.

The disciple now fell in prostration before the Guru and clasped his feet. He accepted his error, expressed remorse and begged forgiveness from the Guru. The Guru lifted him up, blessed him and said, "Follow me."

Both now turned their backs on the 'City of Benightedness', the city of pleasures and plenty, and set out on the highway towards the Himalayas, where people lived in simplicity and self-control. They reached the little hamlet of saints on the banks of the Ganges, where the disciple lived a life of simplicity, self-control, Sadhana, service of the Guru, obedience and devotion to God. He soon realised the Lord through the Grace of his Guru.



SRI SWAMI RAMDAS

Mental Worship

Devotee: Is it right to pray to God and ask Him to forgive us for our daily sins?

Papa: Some shopkeepers tell lies all the day, and at the end of each day put one paisa aside for Tirupati Venkataramana to wash off the sins. Again they go on telling lies. That is not good. What is the use of praying like that every day? After prayer we must never commit sins again.

Devotee: Without knowing we may do something wrong.

Papa: No, we are not children. We are deliberately doing things. We are gifted with discrimination. We can make out whether we are doing right or wrong. Unwittingly, if we do anything, God will forgive us. But discrimination will give us a warning. If we disobey the warning, we shall have to suffer for it.

Devotee: We can ask God to supply our wants.

Papa: Never ask for anything. Ask only for devotion to His Lotus Feet. Devotees are always protected, never abandoned by God. You need not ask Him for your needs. They are provided for by God. That is why He is called Providence.

Devotee: When asking for anything you have to accept duality.

Papa: Non-duality is the highest state. Praying for remembrance is a devotee's state. Surrender yourself to Him. Make God your all-in-all. Do not pray to Him for this thing and that. Do everything as inspired by Him. When the sense of separation goes, whatever you do is good. You are not capable of doing anything wrong. Your life then becomes pure because God is working in you and through you. Wrong is done because of the sense of separation. Selfish life is a sinful life. If there is anything like sin, it is due to ego-sense. Householder saints live in such a pure way. They are absorbed in God and lead a simple life. God looks after them.

How do we earn now? Very often, by taking something out of the mouth of another, we feed ourselves. Let us be honest and sincere. Earning can be done in an honest way. We can be satisfied with what little we get with a pure heart. But greed is there. We want more. Mind is not contented with simple things.

Ram-Nam gives so much peace when it is uttered without any desire. So many repeat Ram-Nam in order to get more wealth, progeny, comforts, etc. They are unhappy and discontented with whatever wealth they may possess.

Some ask Ramdas for blessings. Ramdas sends blessings for what they desire. A devotee once asked Ramdas' blessings for the success of some enterprise. He wrote three letters at different times for the same purpose. Ramdas sent him blessings thrice. But he did not succeed. Then he wrote a letter to Ramdas: "Papa, blessings, blessings and blessings—nothing doing!"

Devotee: The best thing is to sit silent.

Papa: Yes. Take everything God does for you as for the best. Sit silent without praying. Then you are safe in His keeping. He will look after you and see that you are never in need.

Devotee: Give us the benefit of your presence when we think of you.

Papa: When you know He is all-pervading, you must feel His presence with you the moment you remember Him. Such should be your remembrance. That shows how powerful remembrance is. Remembrance is Darshan. Remembrance, Darshan, surrender, all mean the same thing. You must remember with all love, reverence and devotion.

When you come down to body-consciousness you are separated from your Beloved. You feel His presence when you rise above the body-idea. He is with you always but you are not aware of Him. Awareness comes through remembrance. Awareness develops into oneness. You start with duality and end in non-duality. Ultimately, you find you have been seeking your own Self. Give up the idea that you are the perishable body. When Ramdas was granted the experience of the Eternal, he felt that even the sacrifice of a thousand lives in order to gain it would be nothing.

A person goes on pilgrimage. They say when you go to a sacred place you should give up something you like most, as a step towards renunciation. Ask the person, "What did you give up when you went to Kashi?" He says, "The bitter-gourd I have given up. I won't take it again." What a renunciation!

Devotee: Guru's Grace should be there if we are to renounce.

Papa: There is no meaning in waiting for Guru's Grace. It is always there. You must make efforts to know that it is already there. Put your ego to the plough until it becomes tired and says, "Oh God, I am nothing. You are everything." When you become helpless, He becomes your helper.

Devotee: Some say to sit with folded hands and not to try oneself is not good.

Papa: Yes, that is idleness. When the mind is absorbed in God and you sit quiet, that is the highest state of activity. You are alert and watchful. When the mind is free from all thoughts, you are a powerful dynamo. You sit silent and send waves of peace all over the world. Such people are considered to be a burden on society! Our Rishis in the forest were not lazy people. Immensely powerful they were. There are idlers who sit quiet, but their minds are whirlpools.

Sit absorbed in God and see how much power you develop. Spiritual waves go out from you and they reach even thousands of miles away, touch the hearts of people and transform them. A man has a fiery temper; a wave goes to him and he becomes a tame person. People wonder how it happened. These are spiritual waves. They are subtler than the etheric waves which work the radio.

Devotee: At what stage are we to stop external worship, Papa?

Papa: A friend complained to Ramdas, "In spite of doing Puja, etc., for the last thirty years, my mind is not yet free from Vasanas."

Ramdas replied, "Start mental worship. Think of God within you. Leave these external Pujas." He stopped them. The hint came to him at the right time. He must have read about it in books. But the time had not come. "If you want peace, repeat Ram-Nam and worship God in your heart," Ramdas had told him long back. But he had not faith. Later on he felt the need and took his advice. Instead of elaborate Puja he placed some Tulsi leaves only in the shrine and began to repeat Ram-Nam. Then he said, "I am finding peace now." He had no attraction for the world. This Puja was the one attraction. When that also disappeared, he sat quiet and found peace in the heart. Of his own accord it was difficult for him to give it up. First when Ramdas told him, he did not believe it, because he was so much attached to the external worship. As a result he obtained things of the world, but peace he could not get. Getting things of the world makes your mind more and more restless. If you want Jnana, then worship God in the heart. Take your mind inside. Make it lose itself in your real being through concentration, meditation or Samadhi.

Sri Ramakrishna was worshipping Kali, but later, he would sit silent and lose himself within. Better give up the external worship of your own accord or on the advice of some man of spiritual experience and worship God in your heart.

But there is some meaning in the external Puja also. You have what is called Avahana and Virarjana. You superimpose your Atman on the idol for the purpose of Puja. Thus you understand that the God you worship is within, and ultimately you give up external worship. Then you take up mental worship or meditation.

Kabir was one who worshipped God within. He had no external form of worship at all from the very start. He reached a high spiritual state. One day a wandering Sadhu came to him. He was also practising mental worship. In that worship all materials of worship are visualised mentally and this can be done more elaborately and perfectly. You can decorate the image of God within any way you like with necklace and other ornaments, all set with rarest diamonds. You can dress Him in very costly clothes. In this way the Sadhu in his meditation imagined a necklace of precious stones and was trying to put it round the neck of the image over the head but the necklace was not big enough. It had a hook which the Sadhu did not see. He was struggling. Now Kabir could visualise this. He told the Sadhu, "Why do you hesitate? Unlock the necklace and put it round the neck." He did so. He was grateful to Kabir for giving the hint. This story is told about Kabir. Mental worship is better than external worship and ultimately that also must disappear. The object is to realise the Atman. The sooner you do this the better. You must know He is within you.

MENTAL HEALTH

(Swami Sivananda)

Most of the diseases take their origin in over-eating, sexual excess and outbursts of anger and hatred. If the mind is kept cool and calm at all times, you will have wonderful health, strength and vitality. Energy is depleted by fits of anger. The cells and tissues are filled with morbid poisonous materials when one loses his temper and entertains deep hatred. Various kinds of physical ailments crop up. The blood becomes hot and thin and consequently night-pollutions result. Various kinds of nervous diseases are attributable to excessive loss of the seminal energy and frequent fits of explosive anger or wrath.

Let any disease remain in your body. Do not bother much. Do not fret and fume. Develop the power of endurance and resistance. Strengthen your body, mind and nerves. Take plenty of open-air exercises, substantial, nutritious food, medicated oil bath and plenty of rest. Have mental and physical recreation. Lead a well regulated life. Be moderate in food, drink and enjoyments. Lead a spiritual life. All diseases will leave your body by themselves. All microbes will die when your vitality, vigour and strength are at a flood tide. This is the secret of health and happiness.

Do not be carried away by the pompous advertisements made by quacks and charlatans. Lead a simple natural life. You will become all right soon. Do not spend much money on patent medicines. Many of them are harmful and worthless. Endeavour to qualify yourself as your own doctor. Understand the laws of nature and the principles of health and hygiene. Do not trespass the laws of health.

Bask in the sun. Expose your body to the rays of the sun for a short time daily. The sun is the source of energy and power. You will derive energy and power from the sun. One should make it a regular habit to have a sun-bath.

THE DESERT FATHERS

1. A brother was attacked by lust, and the warfare was like a burning fire in his heart, day and night. The brother fought so as not to consent to these thoughts. After a long time the warfare ceased, unable to do anything because of the brother's endurance, and immediately a light came into his heart.

2. Another brother was attacked by lust. He got up at night, went to an old man and told his thoughts. The old man comforted him and he returned to his cell strengthened. But the struggle began again in him. Again he went to the old man. And he did this many times. The old man did not reproach him but spoke to him of what might help him, saying to him, "Do not give way, but rather come every time the demon wars against you." And the brother treated the demon with contempt, and he disappeared when he was despised. For, truly, nothing annoys the demon of lust like revealing his works, and nothing pleases him like concealing one's thoughts.

3. A brother was attacked by lust, and he fought and intensified his ascesis, guarding his thoughts so as not to consent to those desires. Later he came to the church and revealed the matter to everyone. And the commandment was given to all to do penance for that week for his sake, and to pray to God—and the warfare ceased.

4. Concerning temptation to lust, one of the old men, a hermit, said, "Do you wish to be saved after death? Go, and work; go, and give yourself hardship; go, seek and you shall find; watch and knock, and it will be opened to you. In the world there are those who fight in the arena and endure, and although they are given many blows, they receive the crown. Often, indeed, a single athlete is struck by two others and, invigorated by the blows, he overcomes those who are hitting him. Do you see what strength he gains by bodily exercise? Act with vigour, therefore, and God will fight for you against the enemy."

5. Against the same thought, another old man said, "Be like him who passes through the market place in front of an inn and breathes the smell of cooking and roasting. If he enjoys it, he goes inside to eat some of it; if not, he only inhales the smell in passing and goes on his way. It is the same for you: avoid the bad smell. Wake up and pray, saying, 'Son of God, help me.' Do this for other temptations also. For we do not have to uproot the passions but resist them."

6. A brother asked an old man, "If a monk succumbs to temptation he is grieved because he falls from perfection to a lower level, and he struggles to rise again; while he who comes from the world makes progress as a beginner." And the old man answered, "The monk who succumbs to temptation is like a house which collapses. If he is watchful in his thoughts, he finds much material for building the house which collapsed—foundations, stones, wood—and he is able to make more rapid progress than he who has not dug and laid foundations and who does not possess any materials but only has the hope that the house will be finished one day. So it is for him who after a long monastic training succumbs to temptation: if he repents he finds various materials—meditation, psalmody, and manual work—these are the foundations. But the beginner must first learn all this, while the monk can return to his former level."

7. A brother overcome by lust went to see a great old man and besought him, saying, "Be so good as to pray for me, for I am overcome by lust." And the old man prayed to God for him. A second time he went to the old man and said the same thing, and once more the old man did not omit to beseech God for him, saying, "Lord, reveal to me the manner of life of this brother and whence comes this action of the devil, for I have already besought you and he has not found peace." Then God revealed this to him about the brother: he saw him sitting with the spirit of lust beside him and an angel, sent to his aid, was standing beside him and becoming angry with him because he did not fall down before God but, taking pleasure in his thoughts, delivered up his spirit completely to the action of the devil. So the old man knew that the cause came from the brother, and he told him, "It is you who are consenting to your thoughts," and the brother, restored by the old man's prayer and teaching, found rest.

8. The disciple of a great old man was once attacked by lust. The old man, seeing it in his prayer, said to him, "Do you want me to ask God to relieve you of this battle?" The other said, "Abba, I see that I am afflicted, but I see that this affliction is producing fruit in me; therefore ask God to give me endurance to bear it." And his Abba said to him, "Today I know you surpass me in perfection."

9. It was said of an old man that he went down to Scetis, and that he still had a son who was quite small and did not know what a woman was. Now when he became a man, the demons showed him the forms of women, and he told his father, who was astonished at it. Once when he went up to Egypt with his father and saw women, he said to his father, "Abba, these are the people who came to me at night in Scetis." And his father said to him, "These people are village monks, my child, and they wear different clothing from hermits." The old man was astonished at the way the demons in the desert had shown him forms of women; and immediately they returned to their cells.

Divine Name

(Sri Swami Sivananda)

When allopathy, homeopathy, chromopathy, naturopathy, Ayurvedapathy and all other 'pathies' fail to cure a disease, the Divine Namapathy alone can save you. The Divine Name of the Lord is a sure remedy, an infallible cure-all for all diseases. It is an ideal or supreme "pick-me-up" in gloom and despair, in depression and sorrow, in the daily battle of life or the struggle for existence. There is a mysterious power in the Name. There is an inscrutable Shakti in God's Name. All the divine potencies are hidden in the Name of the Lord. It is the cream or the quintessence of all tonics.

You can take this medicine of Nama Japa yourself for curing any disease. You can administer this marvellous medicine to other patients also in your home or elsewhere. Sit at the side of the patient and repeat the Divine Name with sincere devotion and faith. You can repeat *Sri Ram, Om Namasivaya, Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare, Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare* or *Om Sri Ram Jaya Ram Jaya Jaya Ram* or any other Mantra. Pray for His Grace and mercy.

VEDANTA

SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA

Vedanta is knowledge of Brahman, the science of emancipation. Absolutism is the pivot of the Vedanta philosophy. The *Upanishads* form the basis of Vedanta. Vedanta reveals the majesty of man in his essential nature. The oneness of all existence is the message which Vedanta teaches. Vedanta upholds the reality of the indivisible, immanent and transcendent Spirit. It does not exclude matter. It does not exclude anything.

Vedanta is the basic culture of India, the national philosophy of India. It is the summit or acme of Indian philosophy and has kept Hindu society alive for the past eight thousand years.

The Gospel of Vedanta

Vedanta is the only bold philosophy which dares call man God, not merely the son of God or His servant. It proclaims with emphasis that you are the immortal, all-pervading Atman, the Universal Soul or Supreme Brahman in essence, in reality.

Boldness is the keynote of Vedanta. The message of Vedanta is fearlessness, soul-force and unity of consciousness.

Vedanta does not ask for converts or proselytes, but a deeper reassessment of the divine-human equation, a return to the fundamental question of every being—"What am I really? What is my real Self?"

Vedanta proclaims that man in essence is identical with the Supreme Being. Vedanta reminds you of your true, essential divine nature. It says, "O little man! Do not identify yourself with this perishable body. Give up 'I'-ness and 'mine'-ness. Do not hate your neighbour or brother. Do not try to exploit him for he is your own Self. There is a common Self or common Consciousness in all. It is the same in a king and a peasant, an ant and a dog, a man and a woman, a cobbler and a scavenger. This is the real, immortal entity. Mind is the dividing principle which tempts and deludes. Kill this mischievous mind and control the senses which drag you out to the external objects. Fix the mind in the source and rise above body and mind. Eradicate desires, learn to discriminate the real from the unreal, and identify yourself with this immortal, non-dual, self-existent, self-luminous Essence. Behold the one Self in all. See the One in many and all miseries will come to an end."

The student of Vedanta puts the "Neti-Neti" ('not this, not this') doctrine into daily practice. He says, "I am not this perishable body, I am not this mind, I am not this vital air, I am not the senses." This is the path of negation. But he tries to identify himself with the all-pervading Atman or Self. This practice culminates in the attainment of Self-realisation. It leads to the immediate intuition of the all-filling Brahman.

Who is Qualified to Practise Vedanta?

The path of Vedanta is not as easy as it is generally supposed to be. It is a sharp and razor-edge path and is certainly not meant for all.

It is very easy to say, "Sivoham, Soham, Aham Brahmasmi—I am Siva, I am He, I am Brahman", like a parrot. But to live in the very spirit of Vedanta, to feel the oneness or unity of consciousness, to become 'That' in reality, and to radiate the Brahmic bliss, joy and peace, is an extremely difficult task. While repeating 'Soham' if the person's mind is easily upset when another utters a single harsh word, and if he begins to fight with the other person vehemently, there is no use at all in that repetition. It is mere hypocrisy and he will not be able to influence others, for people will take him for a cheat.

Vedanta can be practised only by those who are endowed with real, lasting, deep dispassion, and who lead a life of renunciation. Vedanta is for a select few who are equipped with the four means of salvation and who have removed the impurities of their minds and mental oscillation through constant practice of selfless service and worship.

Wholesale preaching of Vedanta to the masses is not advisable. It will result in chaos, bewilderment and stagnation. Grasping of Vedantic principles and a right understanding of the philosophy and spiritual practices are very difficult.

Universality of the Vedanta Philosophy

Vedanta denotes one's identity with the rest of humanity. According to Vedanta, there is no stranger in this world. Everyone is related to one another in the kinship of the Spirit. In Vedanta, there is no 'mine' and 'for me', but 'ours' and 'for us'; and ultimately 'His' and 'for Him'. If the Vedanta philosophy is rightly understood and acted upon, then it will obliterate all evils that emanate from factional and racial prejudices.

Vedanta has no creed, ceremony or form of worship. It is the science of right living. It is not the sole monopoly of the Hindus or the recluses. It is for all. Vedanta is the property of all and has no quarrel with any religion whatsoever. It preaches universal principles. Vedanta is the only universal religion. It is a great leveller, uniting all and giving room for all.

Vedanta encloses within its sphere all the religions of the world and is strong enough to make them useful and enduring. Vedanta never interferes with forms but concerns itself solely with the life of religions. The Christian need not renounce his Christianity, the Buddhist may adhere to his *Noble Eight-fold Path*, the Muslim may believe in his Koran, and yet all of them may follow Vedanta and realise in practice its high ideals and truths. Their love for their respective prophets and scriptures will become more sober, more enlightened and more enduring. Religious animosity will vanish and the world will move on to its great end without any kind of friction, with greater dignity and more goodwill among its citizens.

Vedanta means no slavery. It gives freedom to all. It embraces and includes one and all. It is the religion of the *Upanishads* and of the great renunciates. Vedanta never condemns any man as beyond hope, never looks upon anyone as accursed, but takes all mankind into its fold. It is extremely catholic and liberal in its outlook.

Vedanta can offer to modern society common faith, a common body of principles and a common moral discipline. It is highly scientific in outlook and has real appeal to men and women of today.

There is no philosophy so bold and sublime as the philosophy of Vedanta. Vedanta alone can eradicate totally all human suffering and bring everlasting peace and happiness. Even a little understanding and practice of Vedanta can raise a man to magnanimous heights of Brahman-hood or God-consciousness and remove all sorts of fears, worries and anxieties of this mundane life.

A Misunderstanding

Some ignorant people say that Vedanta preaches immorality, hatred and pessimism. This is a very sad mistake. Vedanta does not preach either immorality or even indifference to morality. It wants you to destroy selfish love and passion for this body, and develop pure, cosmic love or the magnanimous, divine, spiritual love. The realisation of the Self is not possible for the immoral.

Vedanta never preaches pessimism, but it preaches the pinnacle of optimism. It preaches: "Give up this illusory pleasure. You will attain eternal and infinite bliss. Kill this little 'I'. You will become one with the Infinite. You will become immortal. Give up this illusory world and you will attain the vast domain of supreme peace of the Kingdom of God." Is this pessimism? Certainly not. It is wonderful optimism.

Vedanta and Socialism

Some say that the socialist movement is an off-shoot of Vedanta only which speaks of equal vision and equal treatment. They say, "We are Vedantins. We do not want capitalists, rulers and emperors. The state will look after the education of all children. We will give food to all from the common kitchen. We will issue tickets to the cinema. We will take care of all people. Let all work according to their capacity, temperament and ability. The public will have ample leisure, time to study, amusement, fun and frolic. They will be very happy. They will have no cares and worries. They will have plenty of bread and jam."

This philosophy is very fine indeed! But it is Virochana's philosophy only, the philosophy of the flesh. Their goal is comfortable living. Comfortable living is the enemy of peace and divine wisdom. Bread and jam cannot make one perfect and immortal and cannot confer salvation. It will not lead to the attainment of the knowledge of the Eternal.

The foundation of society, the substratum or background for the whole universe, body, mind and senses, is the Absolute or the Atman, the immortal Soul. An 'ism which denies the existence of such a source and support, which does not have Self-realisation as the goal of life or *summum bonum*, will soon dwindle away into an airy nothing.

A common kitchen is not Vedanta. Socialism is not Vedanta. Socialism cannot remove all social evils or contribute to perfect peace and bliss of man. That philosophy, that discipline alone can lead to perfect bliss, everlasting happiness and immortality which can help to control the mind and the senses, remove ignorance and attain knowledge of the Imperishable.

Pseudo-Vedantins

Vedanta is today a much abused term. All sorts of vanity, hypocrisy and self-conceit have been masquerading in its name.

It has become the fashion of the day to pass for a Vedantin. Man feels ashamed to call himself a Bhakta of God, but he takes a great pride in calling himself a Yogi or a Vedantin, because he foolishly thinks that he will be respected by the public.

Licentiousness is mistaken for a life of expansion. If a man can eat anything in a hotel in any part of the world, if he can move socially with any man or woman, that does not mean that he is a Vedantin. There is much talk of Vedanta nowadays, but there is no real, practical Vedanta. Nobody wants to do any real, solid Vedantic spiritual practice. People talk of unity, oneness and equality, but fight over little useless things. They are full of jealousy and hatred.

Practice of Vedanta

I believe in practical Vedanta and solid spiritual practices. I believe in thorough overhauling of the worldly nature and worldliness of various sorts. You must put Vedanta into daily practice, in every action of yours. Vedanta teaches oneness or unity of the Self. You must radiate love to one and all. The spirit of Vedanta must be ingrained in your cells, tissues, veins, nerves and bones. It must become part and parcel of your nature.

You must be a practical Vedantin, living in the spirit of Vedanta. Mere theorising and lecturing is only intellectual gymnastics and lingual warfare and this will not suffice. What is the use of reading too many books on Vedanta? They will intoxicate you and lead you astray.

The sun, the flowers, the Ganges, the sandal trees, the fruit-bearing trees, the cows—all these teach practical Vedanta to the world. They live for serving humanity in a disinterested spirit. The sun radiates its light alike over the cottage of a peasant and the palace of a great ruler. The flowers waft their fragrance to all without expecting anything. The cool, refreshing waters of the Ganges is drunk by all. The sandal tree wafts its aroma even to the man who cuts it with an axe. All fruit-bearing trees behave in the same manner. They please the gardener who nourishes them as well as the man who cuts them. The cows live to nourish the babies, the children, the invalids and convalescents. Imagine for a moment that the world is devoid of cows for six months, or the race of cows has become extinct. How miserable and weak we will become! The world will abound with anaemic patients. O selfish, ignorant man! Learn lessons from these practical Vedantins and become wise.

Vedanta or the knowledge of the Self is not the sole property of recluses or renunciates. Study the *Upanishads* and you will find that many ruling kings who were very busy in the affairs of life were in possession of the knowledge of Brahman. They even gave instructions to Brahmin priests.

Vedanta does not require colouring of the cloth. Vedanta does not want you to retire to Himalayan caves. It can be practised at home, in all circumstances in life. Vedanta does not preach a doctrine of negation of human effort. It wants you to have a changed mental attitude. It demands a changed angle of vision. Till now, the world was everything. Hereafter, Reality alone is everything.

Learn to discriminate between the permanent and the impermanent. Behold the Self in all beings, in all objects. Names and forms are illusory. Therefore sublimate them. Feel that there is nothing but the Self. Share what you have—physical, mental, moral or spiritual—with all. Serve the Self in all. Feel when you serve others, that you are serving your own Self. Love thy neighbour as thyself. Melt all illusory differences and remove all barriers that separate man from man. Mix with and embrace all. Destroy the sex-idea and body-idea by constantly thinking of the Self or the sex-less, bodiless Atman. Fix the mind on the Self when you work. This is practical Vedanta. This is the essence of the teaching of the *Upanishads* and the sages of yore. This is real eternal life in the Atman. Put these into practice in the daily battle of life. You will shine as a dynamic Yogi or realised sage. There is no doubt of this.

DO NOT BE A FADDIST

(Sri Swami Sivananda)

Do not become a faddist or a slave to some fad. A faddist is intensely or hopelessly attached to his own pet weak theories or beliefs. A Yogic student or an allopath or a naturopath or an Ayurvedic Vaid or a scientist has his own fads. He will never listen to the arguments or views of others, however sound, convincing and strong they may be. A faddist develops intolerance and bigotry, which make his mind callous and hard and thus prevent his intellect from vibrating harmoniously to receive the views of others. No healthy and useful ideas of other schools of thought can enter his mind. He takes up one idea from other schools and tries to refute it through clumsy and untenable arguments. Abandon faddism and become extremely catholic and liberal.

KARMA YOGA

SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA

God is Satchidananda (existence absolute, knowledge absolute and bliss absolute). God is Truth. God is the Light of lights. God is all-pervading power that governs this universe and keeps it in perfect order. He is the inner Ruler of this body and mind. He is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. He has the six attributes of wisdom, dispassion, strength, Siddhis or powers, wealth, and fame. Hence He is called Bhagawan.

He exists in the past, present and future. He is unchanging amidst the changing phenomena. He is permanent amidst the impermanent, and imperishable amidst the perishable things of this world. He is eternal, everlasting, indestructible, unchangeable and imperishable. He has created this world through the three Gunas—Sattwa, Rajas and Tamas—for His own Lila (play). He has Maya under His control.

He is independent. He has pure desire and perfect will. He dispenses the fruits of actions of the individual souls. He is all-merciful. He quenches the thirst of the individual soul in the form of ice and succulent fruits. It is through His power that you see, hear and talk. Whatever you hear is God, whatever you see is God. God works through your hands and eats through your mouth. On account of sheer ignorance and egoism you have totally forgotten Him.

Eternal happiness and the highest peace can be had only in God. That is the reason why sensible, intelligent aspirants attempt to have God-realisation. God-realisation can bring an end to the ever-revolving wheel of births and deaths and bestow supreme and everlasting happiness on mankind. This world is really a long, long dream. It is indeed the jugglery of Maya. The five senses delude you at every moment. Open your eyes, O Prem! Learn to discriminate. Understand His mysteries. Feel His Presence everywhere as well as His nearness. Believe me, He dwells in the chambers of your own heart. He is the silent witness of your mind. He is the holder of the string of your Prana. He is the womb of this world and of the *Vedas*. He is the prompter of desire. Search for Him inside your heart and obtain His Grace.

Yoga of Service

What is the object of service? Why do you serve the poor, the needy and the suffering humanity at large? Why do you serve society and the country? Because by doing service you purify your heart. Egoism, hatred, jealousy, the idea of superiority and all the kindred negative qualities vanish. Humility, pure love, sympathy, tolerance and mercy are developed. The sense of separateness is annihilated. Selfishness is eradicated. You develop a broad and liberal outlook on life. You begin to feel oneness and unity. Eventually you obtain knowledge of the Self. You realise the 'One in all' and 'all in One'. You feel unbounded joy.

What is society after all? It is nothing but a collection of units or individuals. The world is nothing but a manifestation of God. Service of humanity and the country is in fact nothing short of service of God. Service is worship. But one should serve with the right attitude. Then alone will one have quick realisation and purification of the heart.

The sense of separateness is a colossal fetter. Destroy this sense of separateness through Brahma Bhavana (the feeling that everything is Brahman), by developing unity of consciousness and by means of selfless service. This sense of separateness is an illusion created by ignorance or illusion.

Develop keen enthusiasm for disinterested selfless service. Be kind to all. Love all. Serve all. Be tolerant and generous towards all. Serve the Lord in all. That is the way to reach the goal.

Just as a mother who has lost nine children loves the surviving one dearly, so also you have to develop boundless love for all beings. This is the first and foremost qualification for an aspirant. The astral body of one who has this boundless love shines with magnificent brilliance and lustre. There is a glow of ineffable splendour.

He who ignores his own pleasures and comforts and tries to help others is an advanced student on the path of spirituality. He carries the master-key to unlock the realms of spiritual bliss.

You must be able to think quickly and act promptly with unerring precision and profound concentration in times of emergency. You must take care to see that you are not rash or impetuous. You must be cool and collected.

Many aspirants of the present day prefer to do only some pleasant work, some writing, some collection of flowers for Puja, arranging books in the library, some typewriting, some kind of supervision and management work. They dislike work such as drawing water, hewing wood, cleaning dirty utensils, washing clothes, sweeping, cooking, cleaning bedpans and nursing the sick. They consider these tasks as menial. They have not understood the real spirit of Karma Yoga and Vedanta. They are yet Babus. They need rigorous discipline and training. I will put these Babu aspirants to carrying the motion-buckets of the sick for one year, washing plates for another, and sweeping the rooms and washing the clothes of the sick for a third year. Then alone they will become real aspirants. Then alone they will be ready for the commencement of meditation.

If an Ashram is not properly conducted the kitchen becomes a fighting centre. The whole Maya is in the kitchen. Aspirants begin to fight there. One aspirant says, "I did not get any *ghee* or vegetables today." Another says, "The *dal* soup was very watery. Viswaranjan added plain Ganges water to the soup. He dislikes me." But if there is a really developed Karma Yogi to train the young aspirants, real Adwaita Vedanta begins in the kitchen of an Ashram and ends in a cave in the Himalayas. A kitchen is the best training ground for developing tolerance, endurance, forbearance, mercy, sympathy, love and adaptability. One can develop here the spirit of real service and purify the heart for the realisation of oneness of life.

If you live with the Guru, you must be prepared to do any work assigned to you willingly. If you create interest in work which the mind revolts against, you later like to do any kind of work. By doing so you undoubtedly develop your will-power.

Balance of mind brings about real lasting happiness to a disciplined man. It is not a commodity which can be purchased at the market. It is indeed a rare gift which can only be attained by protracted selfless service with Atma Bhav, equal vision, controlled senses and self-restraint. Balance of mind can be attained by developing virtues such as adaptability, broad and generous tolerance and a high degree of endurance, serenity, calmness, control of temper, and by removing worry, fear and depression. All this can be attained through spiritual Sadhana and meditation.

It is serenity and balance of mind that give real, eternal happiness to man. The wealth of the three worlds is nothing when compared to the bliss enjoyed by that great soul who has serenity and balance of mind.

Now, tell me honestly, where is bliss? Who is a great man? Is it a wealthy king with an unbalanced and unbridled mind, living in a palace, or a poor saint with a magnificent calm and balanced mind living in a grass hut on the banks of the sacred Ganges?

If you want to serve another man truly, you should try to please him in all respects. You should not do anything that pleases you only. You should do such actions that can bring him immense happiness. This will constitute real service. But generally, under the camouflage of serving others, people try to please themselves only. This is a serious mistake. He who gives a sharp knife to another to hold, holding the sharp blade himself does real service. A real aspirant rejoices in suffering. He takes on his shoulders the most responsible, difficult and most arduous of tasks and kills his own little self just to please others. He willingly undergoes pain and suffering in order to serve and please others.

To stop the breath by means of Kumbhak for two hours, to twirl the beads for twenty-four hours, to sit in Samadhi for forty days in an underground cellar without food, to stand on one leg in the scorching heat of the summer sun, to do Tratak on the sun at midday, to chant Om, Om, Om in silent and sequestered jungles, to shed an ocean of tears while doing Sankirtan—all these are of no avail unless one combines with them a burning love for Him in all beings, and a fiery spirit of service in serving Him in all beings. Aspirants of the present day are sadly lacking in these two indispensable qualifications. That is the root cause why they do not make any headway at all in their meditation in solitude. They have not prepared the ground, I mean the mind, by protracted practice of love and service in the beginning. I have seen several Bhaktas in all my experiences in life in this line—Bhaktas who wear half a dozen rosaries around their necks and wrists, and mutter *Hare Rama Hare Krishna* day in and day out with a long Japa Mala in their hands. These devotees will never approach a sick man even when he is in a dying condition and give him a drop of water or milk, or ask, "What do you want, brother? How can I serve you?" Out of curiosity they will just look at him from a distance. Can you call these people true Vaishnavites or Bhaktas? Can there be an iota of real benefit in their meditation or Bhajan? A living God in the form of a sick patient is in a dying state. They have not the heart to go and serve him or even to speak a few kind and encouraging words at a critical juncture, when his life is trembling in the balance. How can they expect to have the Darshan of the all-merciful Hari when they have hearts made of flint? How can they hope for God-realisation when they have not the eyes to see God in all beings and the spirit of service to serve Him in all these forms?

That man who has knowledge and devotion alone can really render effective service to the country and the people. Jnana and Bhakti must be the basis of Karma Yoga. Jnana can be combined with Karma

Yoga, or Bhakti Yoga can be combined with Karma Yoga in the beginning with much advantage. The Jnana-Karma Yogi thinks and feels that he is serving his own Atman and realises Adwaitic consciousness. The Bhakti-Karma Yogi thinks and feels that he is serving his Lord and his own Deity in all beings, and realises God-consciousness and has Darshan of his Beloved.

Mere philanthropical work out of sympathy without devotion and knowledge is nothing more than social scavenging. It is not Yoga or worship. It is on a lower plane. It cannot elevate a man much. The progress is dull and slow, if progress you can call it. Remember, it is the mental attitude or Bhav that does immense good.

A Karma Yogi who does all work in the form of worship of God in the beginning, who surrenders his body, mind and soul and all his actions as flowers or offerings at the Lotus Feet of the Lord, who is ever absorbed in the Lord through constant thought of Him, loses himself in God-consciousness by total self-surrender. He gets absorbed in God. His will becomes one with the Cosmic Will. This is the last and advanced stage. He realises that whatever is going on in the world is but the Lila of the Lord or Divine Sport. He realises the truth of the utterances in the *Brahma Sutras*. He feels that he is one with the Lord and that he is a partner in His Lila. He lives for Him only, he lives in Him only. His thoughts and actions are now of the Lord Himself. The veil has dropped. The sense of separateness has been totally annihilated. He now enjoys all spiritual wealth.

A doctor who works in a hospital should think that all his patients are manifestations of God. He should think that the body is a moving temple of God and that the hospital is a big temple or Brindavan or Ayodhya. He should think, "I am doing all my actions to please the Lord and not to please my superiors." He should think that God is the inner Ruler, that He alone manipulates all his organs from behind and that He is the wire-puller of the body. He should think that he works to carry out the Divine Will in the grand plan or scheme of things. He should consecrate all his actions at His Feet, whether they be good or bad. He should then say, "Om Tat Sat Krishnarpanamastu" or "Om Tat Sat Brahmarpanamastu" in the end and at night when he retires to bed. This is the fire of wisdom or the fire of devotion that destroys the fruit of action, brings about purification of the mind, knowledge of the Self and final emancipation. He should never even dream: "I have done such meritorious acts. I will get an exalted place in heaven. I will be born as a rich man in my next birth." By means of constant practice of this nature he will slowly get mental non-attachment towards work.

A lady when she does her household duties should also entertain the above mental attitude. In this manner all actions can be spiritualised. All actions will become worship of the Lord. A man can realise Godhead in whatever situation he may be placed in life, if only he works with this right mental attitude.

May the great Lord, the Flute-Bearer of Brindavan, the lover of Radha, the joy of Devaki, grant us right belief, pure love, right mental attitude and inner strength to do selfless service to the world, and to realise Godhead even while remaining in the world, by doing Nishkamya Karma Yoga with Narayana Bhav, by remembering Him at all times and by offering all actions, body, mind and soul at His Lotus Feet! May the blessings of Siva and Hari be upon us all!

Divine Thoughts

(Sri Swami Sivananda)

Men are Gods in the becoming. If we harbour thoughts about goodness and God always, we will surely become good and ultimately God Himself. It is by the Grace of God that we live and work and have our being. Birth and death, pleasure and pain, name and fame, are all dependent upon our actions in the past and the present. God is not responsible for our happiness or our misery. He is just and also kind. So we cannot blame Him for our misfortunes. Hence, it follows that we should always entertain good thoughts and be calm and cheerful even in difficulties. God does not wish that we should be unhappy. He wishes that we should be wise and enlightened, if need be, through unhappiness. Difficulties help us to build our character and so we should face them boldly.

Our mental equilibrium is broken if we allow the thoughts of worry, care and anxiety to enter the mind and if we ponder over them. We should not give way to hate, fear and lust. We have no power to alter the circumstances and environments according to our wishes. But we can change our own mental attitude. We can live in a mental world of our own and carry on our spiritual practices for the attainment of God-realisation.

Gems from the Gita

HE who performs his bounden duty without depending on the fruits of his actions—he is a Sannyasin and a Yogi; not he who is without fire and without action.

DO thou, O Arjuna, know Yoga to be that which they call renunciation: no one verily becomes a Yogi who has not renounced thoughts.

FOR the sage who wishes to attain to Yoga, action is said to be the means; for the same sage who has attained to Yoga, inaction (quiescence) is said to be the means.

WHEN a man is not attached to the sense-objects or to actions, having renounced all thoughts, then he is said to have attained to Yoga.

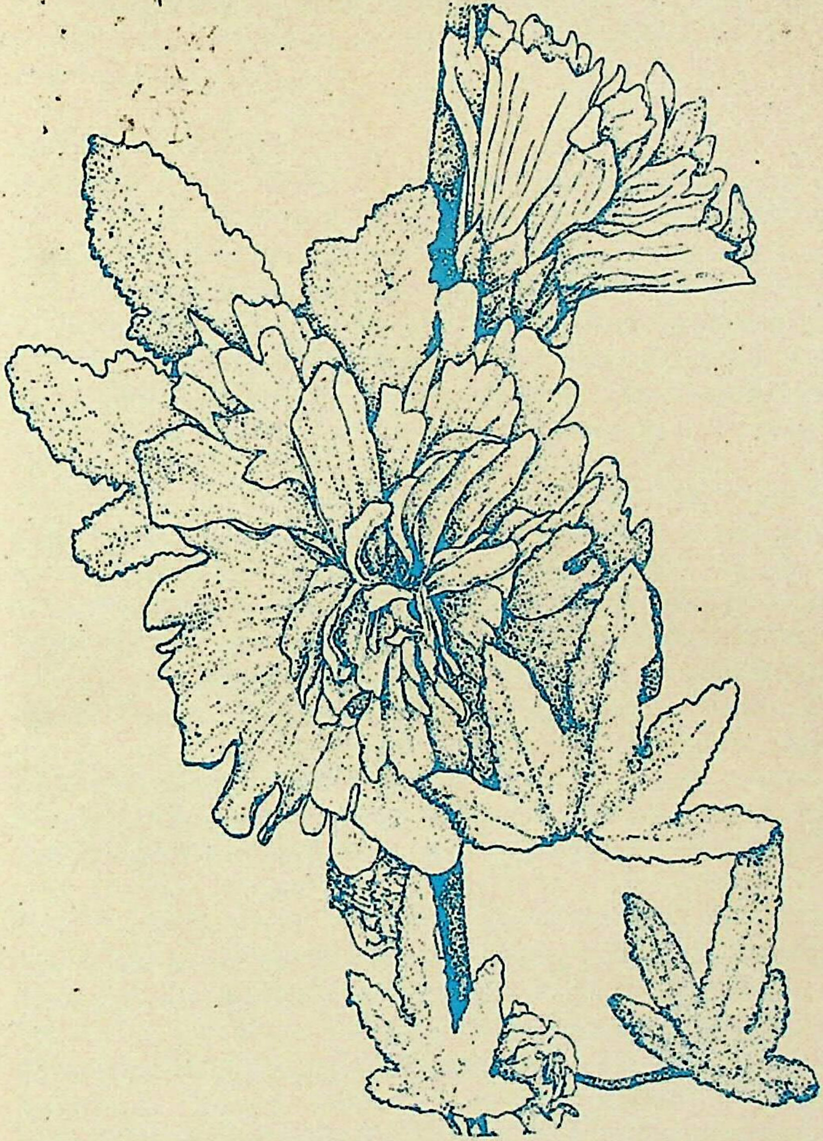
LET a man lift himself by his own Self alone, let him not lower himself; for this Self alone is the friend of oneself and this Self alone is the enemy of oneself.

THE Self is the friend of the self for him who has conquered himself by the Self, but to the unconquered self, this Self stands in the position of the enemy like the (external) foe.

THE Yogi who is satisfied with the knowledge and the wisdom (of the Self), who has conquered the senses, to whom a clod of earth, a piece of stone and gold are the same, is said to be harmonised (is said to have attained Nirvikalpa Samadhi).

HE who is of the same mind to the good-hearted, friends, enemies, the indifferent, the neutral, the hateful, the relatives, the righteous and the unrighteous, excels.

LET the Yogi try constantly to keep the mind steady, remaining in solitude, alone, with the mind and the body controlled, and free from hope and greed.



Within you is the hidden God. Within you is the immortal Soul. Within you is the inexhaustible spiritual treasure. Within you is the fountain of joy and happiness. Within you is the ocean of bliss.

—Sivananda

DAILY MEDITATIONS

SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA

CARELESSNESS IS DANGEROUS

Just as the sedge, even if removed, covers the water of a tank again and again, so also ignorance enshrouds even a wise man if he is careless and if he stops his meditation. Therefore the aspirant should be ever careful. Carelessness is practical death itself. There is no greater danger for an aspirant than carelessness about his own real nature. The man who is careless falls from the ladder of virtue.

DO NOT BE SUSPICIOUS

Suspicion clouds the mind. It creates rupture among friends. It loses friends. It is a defect not of the heart but of the mind. Suspicion is the mark of a mean spirit and a base soul. A noble man suspects none. Suspicion hampers business, disposes kings or heads of states to tyranny and irresolution, husbands to jealousy and hatred.

Freedom from suspicion promotes happiness in man. Suspicion is an enemy of happiness. Ignorance is the mother of suspicion. Attain knowledge, then suspicion will vanish. Suspicion is the poison of true friendship. If it enters the mind, love and confidence go out. Suspicion in one's thoughts is like a bat among birds. They ever fly by twilight.

THE TWO AIDS

Rajas and Tamas try their level best to enter the mental factory and take possession of their lost seats. They should be driven out by discrimination, dispassion and enquiry.

When meditation is not practised, obstacles such as absence of right enquiry, impatience, laziness, inclination towards enjoyment, absorption in sensual and impure thoughts appear. Remove them through right enquiry and discrimination.

ATMAN IS UNBORN

How can there be death for the soul when it has no birth? The *Srutis* emphatically declare: "Atman is unborn, without old age, immortal and imperishable." It is absolutely changeless and is the witness of the six changes that take place in the body on account of the influence of time. The Atman is unattached like water on the lotus leaf, like the all-pervading ether. As Atman is birthless and unattached there is neither agency nor enjoyment in It.

ATTAIN ATMA SWARAJ

Knowledge of Brahman causes release from the trammels of one's own mind. Such a release alone leads to the attainment of Moksha or liberation.

If the mind-thief is punished severely, one can attain liberation. Self-realisation can be had within the twinkling of an eye if you apply yourself diligently to meditation and if you equip yourself with the four means. Then and then alone can you have real freedom in the Soul.

THE SUBSTRATUM—'I'

"I am the destroyer of the tree of worldliness. My reputation is as high as the summit of the hill. I am in essence as pure as the sun. I am the highest treasure. I am all-wise, immortal and indestructible. I am Satchidananda Brahman. I am the formless, supreme Brahman. I am the non-dual, supreme Brahman. I am the indivisible, all-full Brahman. I am the eternally perfect Siddha, Suddha and Mukta Brahman."

Meditate thus and realise your real nature.

REFLECT AND PRACTISE

Purity is the keynote of divine life. He who attains mastery over the mind and the senses is invincible. He cannot be overcome by anyone. Love, kindness, compassion and charitable acts soften and change the heart. Rudeness, cruelty and revenge harden the heart. A worldling cannot understand a saintly man as he has an impure mind, as he is veiled by passion and selfishness.

A thirsty aspirant enters into a new birth. He has a new heart and a new mind. He has an awakened vision.

YOU ARE NEVER HELPLESS

The spiritual aspirant is never helpless. The entire existence is supporting him in his arduous struggle for he is searching for something which is true to all. One may dislike certain things in the world, but Truth can be hated by none.

If all the fourteen worlds were to face him in battle, the spiritual aspirant would count them for a straw, for he is the immortal Spirit, the ruler of heaven and earth and the universe at large!

The road to excellent bliss is clothed with piercing thorns. It passes through a lonely, dense forest haunted by terrifying beasts. It is protected by impregnable fortresses and guarded by multi-hooded, diabolic cobras. The road is hard to tread, the bliss is difficult to attain. The sincere spiritual aspirant is one who has become immune to all afflictions and terrors. No weapon that is cast against him shall prosper. No thought directed against him shall ever fare well.

THOUGHT DECIDES THE FUTURE

Just as you think, so do you become. Think: "I am the body," body you will become. Think, "I am Satchidananda Brahman," Brahman you will become.

Thought alone shapes and moulds a man. Every man has his own thought-world. Imagination works wonders. Your present is the result of your past thoughts and your future will be according to your present thoughts. Speech and action simply follow thought.

A WITNESS ART THOU

Virtue and vice, pleasure and pain are of the mind, not thine. Neither the doer nor the enjoyer art thou. Indeed thou art ever free. In the *Gita* you will find: "All actions are wrought by the qualities of nature only. The self-deluded, through the power of egoism thinketh, 'I am the doer'. But he who knoweth the essence of the divisions of the qualities and functions, holding that the qualities move amidst the qualities, is not attached."

THIS IS YOUR DUTY

If anyone proves to be faithless to you, be faithful to him. If anyone injures you, forgive him and forget the injury. Serve him with all your heart. You will gain immense spiritual strength and peace. The pride of youth might ridicule your action, but it will soon be a dream of the past. Forgiveness will embolden you. The Divinity will shine in its pristine purity, splendour and glory.

Study the nature of the mind. Analyse the mind carefully. Get rid of the three defects of the mind, namely, impurity, tossing and veiling. These hide right understanding. Purify and steady the mind. Fix it on the goal. Rise above the deceptions and temptations of the mind. Change the angle of your mind from the unreal to the Real. Change the vision from illusion to the Reality. This is your duty.

WHAT IS DISPASSION?

Dispassion is the opposite of attachment. It is indifference to sensual enjoyments here and hereafter. Dispassion thins out the fatty, sensual mind. It turns the mind inward. Dispassion born of discrimination is lasting and steady. If anyone seriously thinks about the various kinds of pains and sufferings of worldly life, such as birth, death, worries, diseases, loss, hostility, disappointment and fear, then dispassion will dawn in the mind.

WEEP NO MORE

A life of perfect peace and absolute tranquility cannot be found in the world ~~of senses-around us. If you want to rise above the cares and~~ troubles of ordinary life, aspire for a life in the Atman.

In the *Avadhoota Gita* you will find: "Birth and death, bondage and freedom, righteousness and unrighteousness, names and forms are not in thee. Why then do you weep, O child? Thou art imperishable infinite pure consciousness."

ANASAKTI YOGA

Do not hope for anything. Control the mind and the senses. Give up greed and desire. You do not commit any sin although you perform actions. This is Anasakti Yoga. Free yourself from the pairs of opposites. Be balanced in success and failure. Destroy envy. Though you perform actions you are not bound. This is Anasakti Yoga.

Destroy attachment. Be harmonious. Fix the mind on the innermost Atman. Now all your actions will melt away. You will not be bound. You will attain salvation. This is Anasakti Yoga. O Mokshapriya! Practise this Yoga, purify your heart and attain the goal of life.

BEHOLD THE COSMIC PRESENCE

All creatures have come out of God. They go back to Him alone during dissolution. The whole world is the body of the Lord. How can you hurt or dislike another man or any creature on the surface of the earth when you have taken God as the object of adoration and love? How can you be selfish? Can you eat all the mangoes in your garden yourself alone? Share what you have with others. You will lead a rich and happy life. Giving is the secret of abundance. Practise unrestrained generosity at all times.

Wisdom of Sivananda

Unseen He helps you with faithful hands; unheard He hears your speech. Unknown He knows your thoughts. He is the pure, all-pervading consciousness, Satchidananda.

Your sole business in life is to attain God-realisation. All else is useless and worthless.

O ignorant man! Why do you think of the pleasures of the senses? Have you by your achievement of sensual pleasures ever obtained happiness unmixed with misery? Enough! Enough! Seek the Lord. Delay not! Be quick!

Freedom is the watchword of Hindu Sadhana. Freedom lies in freeing oneself from the bondage of matter and mind, from the bondage of births and deaths.

To ascend to the summit of divine knowledge, the peak of perfection, the pinnacle of spiritual glory, has been the dearest attempt of the aspiring sages, saints and Rishis of India.

Difficult it is to understand the nature of Brahman or the Eternal. Still more difficult is Sadhana or the practice to attain Brahman. But everything is easy for an aspirant who is endowed with a pure heart, burning dispassion, intense longing for liberation and indomitable vigour in Sadhana.

Without Sadhana there is no meditation; without faith in the utterances of the sacred scriptures there is no improvement; without vigilance and alertness there is no progress on the spiritual path; without a Guru there is no divine knowledge.

Old age, like the dreaded tiger, stands threatening at your door. Beauty fades, wrinkles appear on the face and mar the beauty, hair becomes grey, teeth become shaky and fall, body bends forward. Brahma Jnana or the knowledge of the Self is the only remedy to destroy birth, old age, death and disease. Attain this Brahma Jnana through purity, faith, dispassion, discrimination, hearing of *Srutis*, reflection and meditation.

To consider the Guru as equal to God and never to take him as an ordinary man in flesh and blood is the first requirement of an aspirant who treads the path of Truth.

Roam about wherever you like in forests and mountains. Live in caves. You cannot get understanding and light without the Guru.

All difficulties and obstacles on the spiritual path will strengthen you. They can be turned into stepping stones or aids in Sadhana. They arouse in you new strength, zeal and new powers. They are tests. They point out your defects and imperfections. Despair not. March on boldly and achieve the goal of life.

O aspirants! Listen! Spiritual life is an adventure. It is not mere carrying out of a definite programme or daily routine. It is not mere counting of beads or shutting and opening of the nostrils. You will have to walk alone on the spiritual path. You will have to face great difficulties. Great courage, great patience is needed.

You yourself will have to work out your own salvation. You yourself must make an effort. The saints and sages will show the path, will inspire you and remove doubts and pitfalls.

I teach silently without noise of words, without confusion of opinions, without arguments and heated debates. I teach aspirants to despise mundane things, to seek that which is eternal, to bear insult and injury, to desire nothing, to love God, and to seek refuge in God alone.

Brahma Vidya or the science of the Self is the crowning glory of India, the highest achievement of her genius and inner spiritual experience, and her most precious gift to the world.

Mastery over the sex-impulse cannot be accomplished in a few days or weeks. Laborious and difficult is the task. Complete eradication of the sex-impulse is the most difficult Sadhana. It takes time to accomplish it. Without the Grace of the Lord it cannot be totally eliminated. No human effort, however strenuous it may be, can completely eradicate it.

O Nectar's son! Stand up and proclaim: "I am the immortal Atman." The nectar of Life Eternal is flowing freely. Hasten! Close your eyes, meditate and drink freely.

Two people only are free from anxiety in this world—the child who knows nothing and the sage who has attained Self-realisation.

The so-called active-spirited people of the world who work for material gains for their own sake are the most deluded creatures. They have forgotten their real Self. Sages pity these people who are engaged in the external play of life.

The world can be saved only by those who have already saved themselves. A prisoner cannot liberate other prisoners. Therefore, perfect yourself first, save yourself first.

The Guru's contradictory statements and insulting words are a challenge and a test to the disciple. The Guru sees whether the disciple is tempted and upset. The intelligent disciple should know how to act under such circumstances.

The Absolute baffles the mind of even the greatest scholar. It eludes the grasp of even the mightiest intellect. It is experienced as pure Consciousness, where intellect dies, scholarship perishes and the entire being itself is completely lost in it. All is lost, and all is found!

One must try to get more insults. Even if people think that he is a good man, one should try to make them feel that he is not good, and ~~thus get rid of their love for him. The whole world should oppose him.~~ Then only will he prosper. The whole world should desert him and kick him aside. No earthly happiness can bring true Realisation. All should hate him. Then only will his soul be disciplined. There should be no help from the world of the mortals.

The greatest insult received before respectable gentlemen is the beginning of inner growth. The greatest pain and sorrow and grief is the beginning of saintliness.

If a client foolishly changes the lawyer in the middle of a court case he will surely lose the case. Even so, do not go from one preceptor to another. Select a Guru and stick to him and his Sadhana for life. Do not worry about the course of Sadhana and slow progress. The Guru will take care of you.

In the process of unfoldment, experiences have to be patiently undergone. All Prarabdhas have to be patiently worked out. So you must take the medicine, bitter or sour, as prescribed by the Divine Physician. Self-doctoring is no good in the field of Yoga.

Man argues and discusses as long as he has not tasted the sweetness of Japa, Kirtan and meditation. When once he has tasted it, he becomes quiet and calm.

Obstinacy or stubbornness is not strong will. It is born of Tamas. It should be ruthlessly slain if you want to have progress on the spiritual path. Many aspirants possess this evil trait to a considerable degree. That is the reason why they do not evolve quickly. They cannot have a receptive attitude to receive the golden instructions of the teacher. They do not wish to be corrected and moulded by their preceptor. They have their own ways, whims and fancies.

The very root-meaning from which the word 'Sadhana' is derived will give you a clue to a real meaning and import of it. Sadhana is composed of 'Sa' and 'Dhana', meaning Sat (real) and Dhana (wealth), or in other words, the only real wealth in this world. Sadhana is the highest treasure which is bestowed by God on man.

Many take a Guru and get their paths shown by him. But they become doubtful after a while by hearing about other paths and of other saints. This is a grave mistake.

Mind is like a white sheet of cloth. Dip it in any colour and it will catch that colour.

Worldly people want that a Sannyasin should show miracles and create faith in them towards God. They want their Guru to do Sadhana also for them. This they understand as self-surrender.

If you sow wheat in a field and after a few days uproot it and sow sugar-cane and again uproot it and sow barley, none of these will grow. Even so, if you frequently change your method of Sadhana you will lose precious time. Therefore stick to the path shown by your Guru to the very letter tenaciously, irrespective of what others say.

If you regard even the slightest lapse as of the gravest nature, the smallest defect as the greatest obstacle, you will soon attain perfection.

The Lord is the ultimate supreme destination of all humanity. He who has realised God will not be affected or tainted even if he remains in a city.

Feel that your body is a moving temple of God and that your office or house of business is a big temple or Vrindavan, and that all your activities such as walking, eating, breathing, seeing, hearing and reading are offerings unto the Lord. Work is worship. Work is meditation when performed in the right spirit.

Realise right now your identity and intimate relationship with all beings, with ants and dogs, elephants and tigers, Muslims and Hindus, Jews and Christians. There is only a degree of difference in manifestation or expression of what you are. All forms belong to God or the Saguna Brahman. When you look at a tree or shrub, a Sikh or a Muslim, endeavour to behold behind the veil of form, the real hidden Consciousness. If you do this for some time you will feel inexpressible joy. Hatred will cease. You will develop cosmic love or unity of Consciousness. This is a magnanimous experience.

See God in every face and in everything.

Speak little. Always speak sweetly. Do not utter harsh words. Again and again discipline the organ of speech. Keep quiet when another abuses you. Enquire. An abuse is nothing. It is mere jugglery of words. He who abuses wastes his energy and spoils his tongue and character.

The mind exaggerates. Imagination troubles you. You imagine that Mr X is trying to harm you. In reality he is innocent. He is your friend and well-wisher. It is the mind that plays havoc by means of exaggeration and imagination.

Bless them that curse you. Pray for the man who tries to harm and persecute you. Serve the man who speaks ill of you. Love the man who wants to injure you. Embrace all, serve all, love all. Develop the Atma Bhav and Narayana Bhav. In this way the two currents of attraction and repulsion will perish by themselves.

Give up desire for respect and honour. Treat this as dung, as poison. Regard disrespect and dishonour as ornaments. Do not expect high seats or kind words. Do not sit on soft cushions. Sit on the floor. Lord Gouranga sat on a spot where shoes were kept.

Be humble and perform services that are considered as menial in the eyes of the worldly, services which are actually worship of the Lord and Yogic actions to the knower and the wise. At the *Last Supper*, Jesus tied the bootlaces and washed the feet of his disciples. Lord Krishna, the Lord of the three worlds, washed the feet of the guests and priests in the Rajasuya Yajna performed by Yudhishthira. Always remember these two incidents. They will make you humble.

Watch your mind and your emotions constantly. Be on the alert. Develop patience little by little. Grow. Evolve. Expand. Become as strong as the Avanti Brahmin, Eknath or Jesus, and rest peacefully.

Worship God with the flowers of purity, self-restraint, humility, wisdom and devotion. Let pure thoughts of God become the rosary of your mind. Remember God always; pray to Him and depend on Him alone.

Work for the sake of work, without any motive, without the idea of agency (*i.e.* I am the doer, I am the enjoyer), and without expectation of fruits. Feel that you are an instrument in the hands of God and that He works through your organs. Feel also that this world is a manifestation of the Lord and that your children, your wife, father, mother and relations are the images or children of the Lord. If you develop this angle of vision and divine Bhava through constant and protracted practice, then all actions will become worship of the Lord. You will soon have God-realisation. This is a dynamic Yoga, an easy Sadhana.

Here are some formulae for effecting ungrudging and total self-surrender. Repeat them mentally several times daily with feeling:

"Lord, I am Thine, all is Thine, Thy Will be done. Thou art everything." This practice will remove egoism and the thought of agency.

The sense of separateness is a colossal fetter. Kill this sense of separateness by feeling one with the Creator, by developing the non-dualistic Consciousness, and by means of selfless service.

He who ignores his own pleasures and comforts and always tries to help others is really an advanced student on the path of spirituality. He carries the master-key to unlock the realms of spiritual bliss.

There is infinite Shakti in the Name of the Lord. The Lord's Name is the solution for all the troubles that beset mankind in this atomic age. A bomb can only annihilate a city. But the Lord's Name can annihilate the whole world. In an instant the whole world disappears for the aspirant. It enables him to rest in his own Satchidananda Swaroopa—in his own essential nature. Such is the glory of the Lord's Name.

In God there is no death. To know Him is to attain immortality. In Him all things live and move and have their being.

There is but one immortal, bottomless, limitless, surfaceless and shoreless ocean of Existence-Bliss-Consciousness, laughing with the joyous eternal waters of dazzling, brilliant, luminous light and divine nectarine sweetness, roaring with the infinite thundering sound of never-ending Omkara-Nada, ever calm and peaceful and silent and blessed, and dashing within Itself with mountain-likes waves of unbounded delight in the majestic grandeur of the essence of Absolute Existence! There is nothing but that! Thus is the meditation!

Many times Jivanmuktas put on a nasty appearance and act like men gone out of their senses. They sometimes behave in a very unpleasant manner which will annoy any man on earth. They will live like fools just to get rid of the love which the world may develop towards them. They hide their real nature and move like intoxicated drunkards. These are the great men of the earth; not those who are clever in social manners and live like kings and emperors. He who is gone to the Truth cannot behave in a manner which is favourable to the fashions of the ignorant world. Such really great men are many on earth, but the world knows them not due to delusion, and considers only those as great who show a few juggler's tricks before its blinded eyes. The Real is ever hidden and unseen. Only the unreal appears before us, and alas! we are cheated by it.

A person of Absolute Consciousness unconsciously attracts that part of existence where lies his object of desire. At once like a flash of lightning, the things needed by him flow to him like rivers into the ocean, for he is their very Self. The man of wisdom does without acting, enjoys without wishing. He need not command anybody, for he already is the Self of the one whom he may wish to command. He cannot instruct, order, perceive or even be conscious of anything else, for he is the essential Being of everything that he may try to deal with. Even the gods cannot obstruct him from doing anything, for he is the inner Reality of even the gods. The mountains would shake and the earth crumble into a thousand fragments if he so wishes, for he is the Self of even the mountain and the earth. If he shuts his eyes, the sun will become dark. If he breathes, all beings will live. If he so desires, the whole universe will become non-existent. If he so wills, the rivers shall flow, the fire burn and the trees blossom with flowers. If he so desires, the entire universe shall now experience the state of the Eternal and the Immortal. Such is the glory of an embodiment of wisdom of the Truth.

The vision of God is the awareness of the essence of one's own being. God is the essence even of Satan. He is the source of even the worst evil. He fills Himself inside and outside, and there is nothing which He is not.

There is no paper on which to write the nature of Truth. There is no pen which can dare to write about It. There is no person living who can express It. It merely is, everything that is, and there ends the matter. Every effort to express Its nature is trying to kill Its greatness. I am that great Being! I am here, I am there, Om. I am this, I am that! I am the greatest, the best, and again the greatest! My glory knows no bounds! I am the most blessed, the Immortal, the Great!

SRI RAMAKRISHNA SAYS

There are pearls in the deep sea, but you must hazard all perils to get them. If you fail to get at them by a single dive, do not conclude that the sea is without them. Dive again and again, and you are sure to be rewarded in the end. So also in the quest for the Lord, if your first attempt to see Him proves fruitless, do not lose heart. Persevere in the attempt and you are sure to realise Him at last.

The soul enchained is man, but when set free from the chain is the Lord.

Mental Obstacles in Meditation

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SRI SWAMI SIVANANDA

PRESENTED

ANGER

Anger is the gate to hell. It destroys the knowledge of the Self. It is born of Rajas or passion. It is all-consuming and all-polluting. It is the greatest enemy of peace. It is a modification of lust. Just as milk is changed into curd, so also lust or desire becomes transmuted into anger. When a man's desire is not gratified, he becomes angry. Then his mind becomes confused. He loses his memory and understanding; he perishes. A man, when he is angry will talk anything he likes and do anything he likes. He commits murder. A hot word results in fighting and stabbing. He is under intoxication. He loses his senses for the time being. He does not know what he is doing.

Resentment, indignation, fury, wrath and irritation are all varieties of anger according to the degree or intensity. If a man wants to correct another and uses slight anger unselfishly as a force to check and bring about improvement, then it is called 'religious anger'. Suppose a man molests a woman and tries to outrage her, and a by-stander becomes angry with the criminal, it is called 'righteous indignation'. This is not bad. Only when the anger is the outcome of greed and selfish motives is it bad. Sometimes a religious teacher has to express a little anger outwardly to correct his disciples. This is also not bad. One has to do it. But the teacher should be cool within and hot and impetuous without.

If a man often becomes irritable over trifling things, it is a definite sign of mental weakness. One should control irritability by developing love, patience, enquiry, mercy, compassion and the spirit of service. When anger is controlled it becomes transmuted into energy that can move the world. It becomes changed into Ojas, just as heat or light is changed into electricity. Energy takes another form.

If an aspirant has controlled anger completely, half his Sadhana is over. The root cause of anger lies in egoism. Egoism should be removed through enquiry. Then only can one control anger completely to the very root. Through development of the opposite virtues such as forgiveness and love it can be controlled to some extent. The force is reduced. Knowledge alone can completely fry all the latent impressions in the mind. The practice of silence is of great help in controlling anger.

When a man is furious he loses all control. Anger gains strength by repetition. If it is checked, man gains strength of will gradually. An aspirant should direct all his attention towards conquest of this powerful enemy. Sattwic food, Japa, meditation, prayer, Satsang, enquiry, service, Brahmacharya, Kirtan and Pranayama—all these pave a long way in eradicating this dire malady. A combined method should be adopted in its removal. When a man abuses you try to keep quiet. Bear insult. You will gain strength. Check the impulses and emotions to begin with. Whenever there is the likelihood of a burst of anger during a conversation or debate, stop your speech. Always try to speak sweet and soft words. The words must be soft and the arguments hard, but if the reverse is the case, there will be discord. If you find it difficult to control anger, leave the place at once and take a brisk walk. Drink some cold water immediately. Chant Om loudly for ten minutes.

Smoking, meat-eating and drinking alcoholic liquors make the mind very irritable. Therefore they should be completely abandoned. Tobacco brings diseases of the heart. It gives rise to 'tobacco-heart' which makes the mind get easily irritated.

Be careful in the selection of your companions. Talk little. Mix little. Plunge yourself into spiritual practices. This will prevent anger. Enquire: "What is abuse? What do I gain by getting angry? It is only a waste of energy and time. I am not the body. The Atman is the same in all." This will remove anger completely. Anger spoils the blood also. It throws various poisonous ingredients into the blood.

BACK-BITING

This is an abominable habit of petty-minded people. Almost all are victims of this dire malady. Back-biting has become an ingrained habit of narrow-hearted mischievous people. The play of this world is kept up by this evil habit of man. It is Maya's strong weapon to spread restlessness throughout the world.

If you see four men sitting in a group, think that some back-biting is surely going on there. If you behold four Sadhus talking, you can at once, without any shadow of doubt, infer that they are back-biting against another person. One Sadhu will be saying, "The food in that Kshetra is very bad. That Swami is a bad man." Back-biting is more prevalent amongst the so-called Sadhus than amongst the householders. Even educated Sannyasins and householders are not free from this dreadful disease. A real Sadhu who is engaged in contemplation will always be alone.

DOUBT

An aspirant begins to doubt whether God exists or not, whether he will succeed in God-realisation or not, whether he is doing his practices rightly or not. Lack of faith is a dangerous obstacle on the spiritual path. The student slackens his efforts when these doubts crop up. Maya is very powerful. Mysterious is Maya. It misleads people through creating doubts. Sometimes the aspirant gives up his Sadhana altogether. This is a serious mistake. Whenever a doubt arises to overpower a student he should at once take recourse to the company of saints and devotees and remain with them for some time under the influence of their spiritual currents. He should get his doubts cleared by conversing with them. Generally an aspirant starts his Sadhana with expectation of so many Siddhis within a short time. When he does not get them he becomes dejected and stops his practices. This is the trouble in almost all cases. He thinks that the Kundalini will be awakened within six months and he will have clairvoyance, clairaudience, thought-reading, flying through the air, etc. He entertains so many fantastic and queer ideas.

There are various kinds of impurities in the mind. It takes a long time for purification of the mind and getting it one-pointed. Concentration is a question of practice for several lives. It is the most difficult practice in the world. One should not get dejected after some practice for some months or for one or two years. Even if you do a little practice, the effect is there. Nothing is lost. That is the immutable law of nature. You will not be able to detect the little improvement that has come out of a little practice as you have not a subtle and pure intellect. You must develop virtues like dispassion, patience and perseverance and tenacity to a maximum degree. You must have unshakable conviction in the existence of God and in the efficiency of spiritual practices. You must have strong determination—"I will realise God right now in this very birth, nay, in this very second. I will realise or give up this life"—this must be your state of mind.

Doubts are of three kinds—feeling of doubt or suspicion, spiritual doubt, and the wrong feeling that the Self is the body and the world is a solid reality. Hearing of the scriptures will remove suspicion. Meditation will remove spiritual doubt. Profound and deep meditation and realisation will remove the wrong feeling that the body is the Self.

Doubt or uncertainty is a great obstacle on the path of Self-realisation. It bars spiritual progress. This must be removed by Satsang, study of religious books, enquiry and reasoning. It will raise its head again and again to mislead aspirants. It should be destroyed beyond resurrection by certainty and conviction and firm, unshakable faith based on reason.

Doubt is your great enemy. Doubt causes restlessness of mind. Destroy all doubts through enquiry and knowledge.

Do not bother about doubts. There is no end to them. Purify your heart. Go on vigorously with the purificatory processes such as Japa, meditation and service regularly. Meditate regularly. The doubts will be cleared by themselves in a mysterious manner. The great teacher or inner Ruler is with you. He will illumine you and remove your doubts.

DREAMS

Various sorts of fantastic dreams trouble some aspirants very much. Sometimes there is a mixture of meditation and dreams. As the dream phenomenon is very peculiar and inexplicable, it is very difficult to control dreams unless you wipe out all the latent impressions in the causal body and control all thoughts. As you grow in purity, discrimination and concentration, dreams will decrease.

The presence of dreams denotes that you are not yet well established in deep meditation, that you have not removed tossing of the mind and that you have not done constant intense Sadhana.

EVIL THOUGHTS

Suppose the evil thoughts stay in your mind for twelve hours and recur every third day. If you can make them stay for only ten hours and recur once a week by daily practice of concentration and meditation, that is a decided improvement. If you continue your practice, their period of stay and recurrence will be gradually lessened. Eventually they will disappear altogether. Compare your present state with that of last year. You will be able to find out your progress. Progress will be very slow in the beginning. It will be difficult for you to gauge your growth and progress.

Your mind will sometimes shudder when evil thoughts enter it. This is a definite sign of spiritual progress. You are growing spiritually. You will be tormented when you think of your evil actions committed in the past. This is also a sign of spiritual upheavel. You will not repeat the same actions. Your mind will tremble. Your body will quiver whenever a wrong impression of some evil action urges you to do the same act through force of habit. Continue your meditation with full vigour and earnestness. All memories of evil actions, all evil thoughts, all evil promptings of Satan will die by themselves. You will be established in perfect purity and peace.

FEAR

This is a very great obstacle on the path to God-realisation. A timid aspirant is absolutely unfit for the spiritual path. He cannot dream of realisation even in a hundred thousand births. One must risk one's life if one wants to attain immortality and bliss. Spiritual wealth cannot be gained without a great deal of self-sacrifice and self-abnegation. A fearless dacoit who has no attachment to the body is fit for God-realisation. Only his current of thought will have to be changed. Fear is an imaginary non-entity. It assumes solid forms and troubles the aspirant in various ways. If one conquers fear, one is on the road to success. He has almost reached the goal.

It took me years to understand thoroughly the subtle workings of the mind. Mind plays havoc through the power of imagination. Imaginary fears of various sorts, exaggeration, concoction, mental dramatisation, building castles in the air, are all due to the power of imagination. Even a perfectly healthy man has some imaginary diseases or other due to the power of his imagination. Much energy is wasted on account of imaginary fear.

FIVE HINDRANCES

The five hindrances to meditation—ill-will, sense-desire, sloth and topor, flurry and worry, and perplexity—should be removed, for when these are not removed, meditation cannot be practised. The mind that lusts after many things through sense-desire is not concentrated on one object, and being overcome by desire, it does not put away the sensuous element. The mind that is harassed by ill-will concerning an object, does not function with calmness. The mind that is overcome by sloth and topor is unwieldy. Obsessed by worry and flurry it does not repose but flits about. Struck by perplexity it does not go on the path that leads to the attainment of meditation and Samadhi.

FORCE OF SAMSKARAS

When the aspirant does intense Sadhana to obliterate the old latent impressions in the mind, they try to rebound upon him with vengeance and with redoubled force. They take forms and come before him as stumbling blocks. The old impressions of hatred, enmity, jealousy, fear, feelings of shame, respect, honour, etc., assume grave forms. The latent impressions are not imaginary non-entities. They turn into actualities when opportunities crop up. The aspirant should not be discouraged. They will lose their force after some time and die by themselves. Just as a dying wick burns with intensity before it gets extinguished, so also these old impressions show their teeth and force before they are eradicated. The aspirant will have to increase the force or momentum of spiritual Samskaras (latent impressions) through Japa, meditation, Satsang, study of scriptures and the cultivation of pure thoughts and actions. These new spiritual Samskaras will neutralise the old vicious Samskaras. The aspirant should be intent on his Sadhana. He should plunge himself into spiritual practices. This is his duty.

GLOOM AND DESPAIR

Just as clouds screen and obstruct the sun, so also the cloud of gloom and despair will stand in the way of your practice. Even then you must not stop the practice of Japa, concentration and meditation. These small clouds will soon pass off. Give the suggestion to the mind: "Even this will pass away."

GREED

First comes desire, anger follows, then comes greed, then delusion. Desire or lust is very powerful, so prominence is given to it. There is intimate connection between desire and anger. Similarly there is close relationship between greed and attachment. A greedy man has great attachment to money. He lives to collect money. Money is his very blood and life. He is a gate-keeper only for his money. The enjoyer is his prodigal son. Money-lenders are the favourite tools of our friend greed. He has taken his stronghold in their minds. They are the Shylocks of the present day. They suck the blood of poor people by taking enormous interest. They are cruel-hearted people. They pretend to show that they are of a charitable disposition by doing charitable acts such as opening alms-houses, building temples, etc.

Such deeds cannot neutralise their adominable sins and merciless acts. Many poor families are ruined by these people. They do not think that the bungalows and palaces in which they live were built out of the blood of these poor people. Greed has destroyed their intellect and made them absolutely blind. They have eyes but they do not see. Greed always makes the mind restless. A man who has one lakh of rupees plans to get ten lakhs. A millionaire schemes to become a multi-millionaire. Greed is insatiable. There is no end to it. Greed assumes various subtle forms. A man thirsts for name and fame and applause. This is greed. A sub-judge thirsts to become a high court judge. A third class magistrate thirsts to become a first class magistrate. This is also greed. A Sadhu thirsts to get psychic powers. This is another form of greed. Another Sadhu thirsts to open several Ashrams. This is also greed. A greedy man is absolutely unfit for the spiritual path. Destroy greed of all sorts through enquiry, devotion, Japa, meditation, contentment, honesty and generosity. Enjoy supreme peace now.

HATRED

This is the deadliest foe of an aspirant. It is an inveterate enemy. It is an old standing associate of the soul. Contempt, prejudice, sneering, teasing, taunting, ridiculing, mocking and frowning are all forms of hatred. Hatred bubbles out again and again. It is insatiable like lust or greed. It may subside temporarily for some time and may again burst out with redoubled force.

Hatred ceases not by hatred but by love. Hatred needs prolonged and intense treatment as its branches ramify in various directions in the subconscious mind. It lurks in different corners. Constant selfless service combined with meditation for a period of twelve years is necessary.

An Englishman hates an Irishman and *vice versa*. A Catholic hates a Protestant and *vice versa*. This is religious hatred. There is communal hatred. One man hates another at first sight without any reason. This is one's nature. Pure love is unknown in this world amongst worldly people. Selfishness, jealousy, greed and lust are the retinues of hatred. In Kali Yuga the force of hatred is augmented to a great extent.

Pure unselfish love should be cultivated. One must have fear of God. Solomon says, "Fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Service with the feeling that everything is the Self is the beginning of wisdom. Such service can remove hatred completely and bring in Adwaitic realisation of oneness of life. Aversion, prejudice and contempt will completely vanish by selfless service. Vedanta in daily life, when put into actual practice, can eradicate all sorts of hatred. There is one Self hidden in all beings. Then why do you frown at others? Why do you treat others with contempt? Why do you divide and separate? Realise the unity of life and consciousness. Feel the Atman everywhere. Rejoice and radiate love and peace alone everywhere. You will then be a blessing unto the whole world.

ENVY

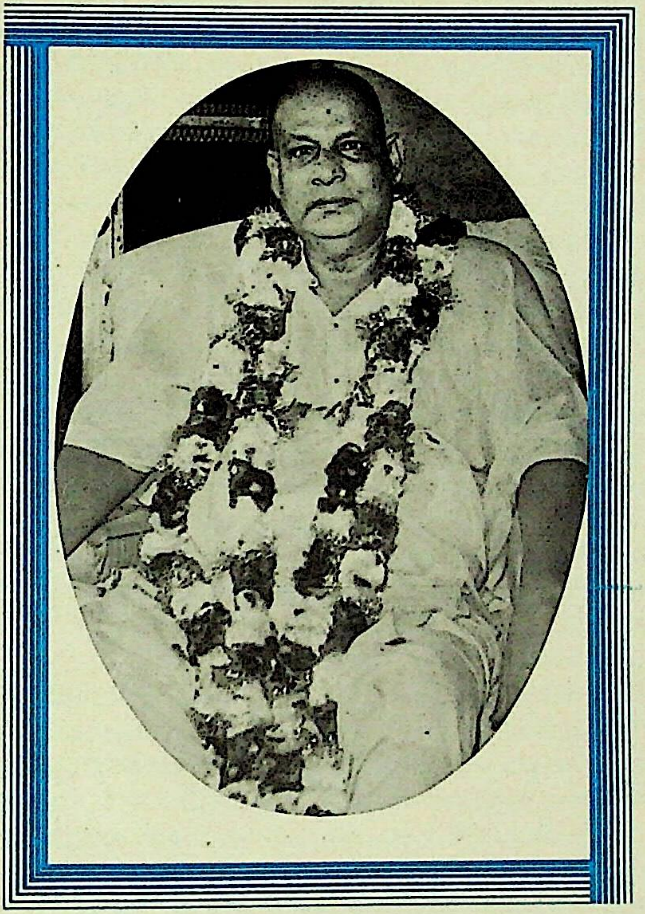
This is a great obstacle. Even Sadhus who have renounced everything and who live with one loin-cloth only in the caves of Gangotri and Uttarakasi in the Himalayas are not free from this evil. Sadhus are more jealous than householders. Their hearts burn when they see some other Sadhu in a flourishing condition, when they notice a neighbouring Sadhu being respected and honoured by the public. They try to vilify him and adopt methods for his destruction or elimination. What a sad state of affairs! What a deplorable spectacle! When the heart burns how can you expect peace of mind? Even highly educated people are very mean and petty-minded. Jealousy is the worst enemy of peace and knowledge. It is the strongest weapon of Maya. Aspirants should always be on the alert. They should not become slaves of name, fame and jealousy. If there is jealousy, they are small, petty beings only. They are far from God.

One should rejoice in the welfare of others. One should develop complacency when one sees others in a prosperous condition. He should feel the Atman in all beings. Jealousy assumes various forms such as hatred, contempt and dislike. All forms of jealousy should be totally eradicated. Just as milk bubbles out again and again during the process of ebullition, so also jealousy bursts out again and again. It should be rooted out entirely.

THE CALL

(Sri Aurobindo)

The call upon us is to grow in the image of God, to dwell in Him and with Him and be a channel of His joy and might and an instrument of His works. Purified from all that is evil, we have to act in the world as dynamos of that Divine Electricity and send it thrilling and radiating through mankind, so that wherever one of us stands, hundreds around may be full of His light and force, full of God and full of Ananda. Churches, theologies, philosophies have failed to save mankind because they have busied themselves with intellectual creeds and institutions. They have neglected the one thing needful, the power and purification of the soul.



Man and God-Man

Sivananda himself considered everyone as his Guru. He tried to learn from whomsoever he could, in whatever little way he could. He often declared openly that his own disciples were his Gurus.

"I have learnt many lessons from them." During the Yoga-Vedanta classes in the Ashram, Sivananda listened to the lectures of even baby souls. Frequently he pulled up a slumbering aspirant, "Do you keep notes of the important points that you hear during the class?" Perhaps the aspirant did not, but Swamiji did. And when he returned to his Kutir, he reflected over the ideas thus gathered by him in the class. This gave rise to other sublime thoughts. Sivananda incorporated all the ideas in a fine article and presented it to the world through a book or magazine.

Experience was Sivananda's greatest Guru. From every experience that he passed through and saw others pass through, Swamiji drew a lesson. For instance, in his youth he had seen a whole bazaar being reduced to ashes because the shops had thatched roofs. And he never forgot the lesson. He would much rather let a person live in the open than in a thatched cottage. Similarly, the Master had experienced, during his wandering days, the pains of hunger and thirst and privation. He knew what they meant, and even after becoming the head of a big institution with a large following, he always ran to the aid of the starving man and the destitute even without their asking.

If Sivananda considered everyone and every experience as his Guru, he had special veneration for his Siksha Guru and his Diksha Guru. Enquiring about the progress of the music class in the Ashram, he once told the students, "You should all greet your music teacher with folded palms and *Om Namo Narayanaya.* You should revere the Guru who teaches you the Vidya. Only then will the learning be fruitful."

The students were a little apologetic. "Yes, Swamiji, we are all doing that, though sometimes we forget."

"No, no, you should never omit this," said Sivananda and added thoughtfully, "see, I had Swami Viswanandaji's company for only a few hours. Yet I daily remember him in my Stotras in the morning. I include Swami Vishnudevanandaji's name also, as it was he who performed the Viraja Homa for me. It is very necessary. Only then will the spark of the desire for liberation burn brightly in us."

And he lapsed into a memory of his boyhood days. "Once I learnt fencing from a Pariah," he recalled. "It lasted for only a few days. He was an untouchable. Yet I used to greet him with coconut and betel leaves. Guru is Guru to whatever caste or creed he belongs."

Devotion was deep-seated in Sivananda whether for his Guru or for his Ishta-Devata, whether for saints or for sacred places. He would never take his lunch without doing Puja at a small altar he had in his own Kutir. In this one act he claimed total privacy. And only once had Swamiji's personal attendant, by accident, witnessed a spectacle—Sivananda lying down on the ground in full prostration before the Deity. This prostration was not a mechanical one, nor was the worship. To him, his Deity was intensely more real than all worldly phenomena.

On a Sivaratri night, when the Master came up to the Ashram Mandir to offer worship, his disciple Venkatesananda watched him closely, observantly, and thereby learnt the difference between real worship and ritualistic worship. Later, Venkatesananda described what he saw in vivid detail:

"I was watching. Hardly on one face could I detect real living faith. Some threw the *bael* leaves on the Lingam; some half-sleepily allowed the leaves to drop on it; and a few pious devotees performed this ceremony as a religious duty. To them all the Siva Lingam was but a stone which somehow represented God—they did not know how! Last of all came Sivananda himself, *bael* leaves in hand. The radiant face shone with an extraordinary light. He let a few leaves drop at the foot of the Holy Bull, Nandikeshwara, seeking his permission to worship the Lord. When Sivananda gazed at the Lingam before offering the *bael* leaves which he held in his hand, he did not pray or recite hymns or repeat Mantras. He (his eyes) spoke to the Lingam. It was a living presence to him. What is the expression on your friend's face when he meets you? That is the expression that adorned Sivananda's face as he gently offered the *bael* leaves to the Lord—gently in order that even the tender leaves might not hurt Him.

"A greater wonder was in store. Quickly, in the twinkling of an eye, and unnoticed by anyone, he turned round and threw a few *bael* leaves on all those who were there conducting the Puja. Sivananda worshipped them, he worshipped the Lord in all, the Virat Swarupa. The keynote in this Virat Puja is performing it unobserved or else it degenerates into a mere empty show."

People were amazed at the singular devotion displayed by Sivananda whenever he happened to touch a holy place or meet a living saint. This aspect of his personality also came to the fore when troupes of Bhaktas from outside places visited the Ashram and staged a Rasa Lila or a Harikatha or a Divya Nama Sankirtan.

Simplicity, spirit of service, compassion and cosmic love, unrestrained generosity, deep devotion—these were but some of the many facets of the integrated personality of Swami Sivananda. There were others like serenity, fearlessness, humility and wisdom. One or the other of these diverse aspects of his personality predominated at a particular time. When devotees offered Pada Puja to him, he sat with an indrawn look, radiating serenity. When he conversed with his dear disciples, he spoke like a loving mother. When he delivered a public discourse, wisdom flowed from his mouth and the admonishing finger was often raised to warn the audience of the dangerous consequences of pursuing sense pleasures. At the time he gave Sannyas initiation, he inspired awe and reverence in the novice. When he exchanged innocent pleasantries with his guests, he bubbled with humour and good cheer.

Underlying these many facets of the Master's personality was his spirit of renunciation. One day, when he saw his disciple Savitri Asopa gaze with wonder at a particularly arresting portrait of him, Swamiji himself commented: "You can sit like that only if you have renunciation."

Renunciation was the key to the Master's personality. It was his very essence. Sivananda was a Sannyasin first and last. But to him, renunciation did not mean untidy dress and unkempt hair. He was scrupulously clean and showed by personal example that decency should be maintained even in the standard of a Sannyasin's dress. To Swamiji, renunciation meant renunciation of the ego, of 'I' and 'mine'. It meant giving up of attachment. True renunciation belonged to the mind.

In this view of renunciation, no torturing of the body was involved. On the contrary, Swamiji took pains to keep his body always healthy so that it could be put to efficient use in the service of God's children. In the early years of his mission, Sivananda used to go for a long evening walk. In the winter months, he used to play badminton in the Ashram itself. When work increased, he could not find sufficient time for these. So he got a tennis ball and racket and played on the wall for a few minutes whenever he felt the need for relaxation. After those few minutes, Swamiji would be ready again for another spell of work. As he grew old, the Master did some simple exercises in the bed itself. And he never missed his Asanas and Pranayama. These practices kept his body fit for work.

Likewise, Sivananda, while remaining a Sannyasin, retained a good aesthetic sense. He would give matchless appreciation for a German bag, a pretty coffee set, a beautiful coat, a lovely cloth, or delicious eatables. In Swamiji one saw not a cynical rejection of the world, but acceptance of it in divine light. This was a remarkable feature of Sivananda's personality. While he could resist the temptation of sense objects, he could, with equal facility, enjoy them without getting attached to them.

His disciples once stealthily took him to a cinema house in Dehra Dun. As the car suddenly stopped in front of the theatre, two devotees opened the door, and with garland in hand said, "Swamiji, Chaitanya Mahaprabhu wants to meet you who look like his reincarnation."

Without a word of protest, Swamiji went in and saw the picture. But commented meaningfully, while the car sped back on the midnight roads of Dehra Dun towards Rishikesh, "How calm and quiet the roads are now!" which revealed the sage's love of silence.

Talking to a visitor in the Ashram one day, Swamiji showed him his many notebooks, pens, watches. "People think that a Sannyasin should not have this or use that," he said, tapping a call-bell playfully. "But I have no such notion. Service is the thing. Work, work and work for the welfare of humanity. Keep the instruments—the body and the mind—in a fit and healthy condition for the work. I am a different kind of Sannyasin. I like to serve. People imagine that a Sannyasin should always be grave and should always sit like this (*here the Master actually closed his eyes and sat erect*) and thus give the impression to them that he is a Jivanmukta. But I am of a different type. Work should be your meditation. That is my method."

With regard to work too, Sivananda was guided by certain principles. D.I.N. was the first. *Do it now*—that was what it stood for. When Sivananda wished to do a thing, he would do it straightaway. It happened during the Indo-Ceylon tour. Swamiji and party were going in bullock carts from the Rameswaram railway station to the temple. While on the road thus, the Master heard that a lady who had been following him from Andhra desired to be initiated into the Rama Mantra while at Rameswaram.

"If you wish to do a good act, do it at once," said Sivananda, and stopping the cart, sent for the lady, and gave her Mantra Diksha on the spot.

It was Swamiji's family tradition to act thus. He once narrated the story of his grandfather. The latter was in danger of losing a plot of land to the law twisters. The decision was to be reached the next morning. That evening itself the old man brought all the building materials and engaged all the labour. They worked overnight and the next morning there stood on the disputed plot a neat little building. And with that, the old man's ownership of the land stood too.

Sivananda never forgot the lesson. He never postponed action. When the Siva Linga was to be installed in the Ashram Mandir, a discussion arose between two groups of Pundits about the auspicious hour for the ceremony. Sivananda came upon the scene. "Devotees cannot wait for the conventional hour," he said. "Start the Akhanda Kirtan today. There shall be no obstacle in the way." Thus was born the non-stop Maha Mantra Kirtan and the sacred installation in the Viswanath Mandir was gone through without further ado.

While Swamiji was in Swaragashram, two of his disciples decided one day to request him to give them Sannyas. They wrote their wish on a piece of paper and stuck it in Swamiji's Kutir. When Sivananda saw the paper, he said to himself, "There is not a moment to be lost. They might change their minds if I delay even a little." He brought a barber immediately and, locking him in his Kutir, went in search of his disciples, his idea being that the barber should not go away when he himself went looking for his disciples! He found the two soon enough, brought them to his Kutir and gave them the desired initiation.

On July 11, 1950, a devotee introduced to Swamiji a lady: "This is Bani Bai, Swamiji. For the past twenty years she has been doing Hari Katha Kalakshepam in South India. In fact she wanted to conduct a Kalakshepam here also . . . "

Sivananda did not wait for him to complete the sentence. "Yes, yes, I will arrange for it tonight. She must conduct the Katha here. This is the most holy place, on the banks of the Ganges. It is a rare opportunity."

The devotee hesitated. "But, Swamiji, we have to leave this evening."

"Then I will have it arranged now itself!" said Swamiji, and called out, "O Rajagopalji, ring the bell. Call Palji with the *tabla*. Get the harmonium and the *tanpura*. Purushottam, bring some sugar-candy and black pepper. Keep some water here. Viswanath, spread the carpets. Call the neighbours also. Nityanandaji, get some *prasad* for distribution after the Katha." In five minutes, Bani Bai had commenced her Kalakshepam.

It was another principle which Sivananda adhered to in all his work—attention to detail and thoroughness of execution. If something was to be done at all, it should be done well, no matter what the work was and how big or how small it was. On August 3, 1936, Swamiji laid the foundation-stone for a market in Rishikesh. After he returned to his Kutir, his disciples discussed the way in which he had done the stone-laying. Many felt that he need not have taken the trouble to do the actual work of the mason.

"Swamiji, generally big people, when they lay the foundation-stone of a building, merely place a little bit of mortar as a formality."

"But I am not a big man," remonstrated Sivananda and explained his attitude. "All that we do should be done with all our heart and soul, and to the maximum perfection possible. As the saying goes, 'Even if the dead person is a sweeper, the obsequies should be done well.' If I am to be a mason for a moment, I should do that work to my satisfaction. Every bit of work allotted to me I should do well."

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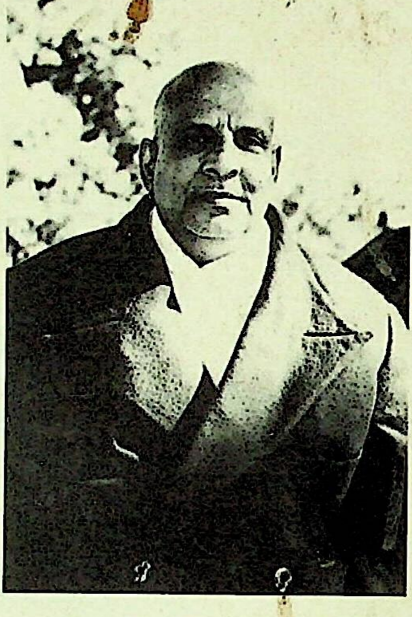
LORD RAMA

DIVINE LIFE



THE MAGIC CONCH

Jealousy is the essential nature of many people. There is jealousy everywhere. Here is a beautiful story to illustrate that a jealous man loses in the end, and that a man loses even a good boon by misuse due to jealousy. The good and welfare of all beings is the intention of the Lord.

A man obtained a conch by worshipping a certain god. The conch could fulfil the desires of the man when it was blown, but his neighbour would get double the result.

The man blew the conch, desiring a mansion. At once he got a beautiful house to live in, but his neighbour got two mansions. Again he blew the conch, desiring an elephant. He got it, but his neighbour got two elephants.

The owner of the conch became jealous of his neighbour. He did not want him to be benefited. So he again blew the conch with the desire that he lose one eye. The neighbour lost both his eyes. When he came out of his house he fell into a well and was drowned because he was blind. He lost his life because of the jealousy of the man with the conch.

Coming to know of these events, the god snatched the conch away from the hands of the jealous man and admonished him severely.

Jealousy is one of the worst vices. One should wish the welfare of all and rejoice in their prosperity and good fortune.

INSECTS

Our Friends and Enemies

The praying mantis is a large insect that eats other insects, so it is a very useful creature.

Of course, the insects that are our friends do not deserve any credit for being helpful. Neither do those that harm us deserve any blame for the damage they do. The insects are simply living their own lives. It happens that in living their lives some of them make things we want or help us in other ways. It happens that others, in living their lives, interfere with ours.

There were no insect pests and no insect friends before man lived on earth. During the Coal Age, for example, there were giant cockroaches. But they were not pests, for there were no people for them to interfere with. The first honey-bees were not friends, for there were no people for them to help. When we think of insects as being friends or enemies, we are being selfish. We are thinking only of ourselves and how the insects help or harm us.

But we cannot afford to be unselfish in thinking of insects. They are our greatest rivals. To hold our own against them we have to carry on a never-ending battle.

High on the list of insect enemies are mosquitoes of certain kinds. Malaria and yellow fever are two of the diseases they carry. The common housefly is not only a nuisance, but also a danger because it carries typhoid and tuberculosis germs. The tsetse fly has spread over four and a half million square miles in Africa, carrying sleeping sickness with it. Fleas and body lice both carry typhus. Fleas also carry bubonic plague, the dreaded Black Death of the Middle Ages.

The cabbage-white butterfly, when it is a caterpillar, eats cabbage. It is one of our few enemies among the butterflies. Most butterflies are helpful, or at least not harmful. We have a great many more enemies among the moths.

The codling moth is often called the apple worm. This insect is to blame for many of our wormy apples.

Japanese beetles are not at all particular about their food. They destroy the leaves, blossoms, and fruit of nearly 300 different species of plants.

REPORTS

NEW PUBLICATIONS

We are pleased to report the release of *God-Experience* by Sri Swami Ramdas, affectionately known as 'Papa'. In this most inspiring volume Papa answers the many questions put to him by devotees during Satsang. It is a thrilling book giving his illuminating, and sometimes witty answers, interspersed with stories and anecdotes. The burden of Papa's instructions is that we should continually repeat Ram-Nam for the solution of all our problems, cares and worries, and for the achievement of God-realisation and eternal bliss. We are grateful to Pujya Mataji (Mother Krishnabai) of Anandashram for graciously giving us permission to print this volume here. We are sure that devotees reading the book will benefit immensely.

DESK PRODUCTION

The production of desks for use in African schools is progressing very well, thanks to Sri Krishna Pillay, Sri Raji and Sri Ramdath of Pietermaritzburg, and Sri A.C. Reddy of Merebank. Together with the devotees of the Reservoir Hills, Chatsworth and Shallcross Branches, they put in many hours during the holidays, often working late into the night. We have despatched about 230 desks to the two High Schools at Madadeni, near Newcastle. The balance of 170 will be forwarded some time during February. Besides the love and devotion put into this work, one can see the beautiful craftmanship in the product turned out by our members.

"SIVANANDA DAY"

A very pleasant "Sivananda Day" was organised for all our Branches on Sunday the 10th of January. Bhajans, discourses and Kirtans formed the day's programme with some Karma Yoga in between. The quiet and elevating atmosphere that prevailed throughout the day was felt by all those present. Circulars have already been sent out for the next "Sivananda Day" to be held on the 14th of March, 1976.

ACE EDIT SYSTEM

With the arrival of the Ace Edit System, the computerisation of our filmsetting department is now complete. Details of the system are given on the cover opposite.

COMPUTERISED TYPESETTING

Modern printing techniques have advanced considerably during the last decade. With the progress made by Offset Litho Printing, filmsetting also made its advent and has now come to the forefront in book publishing.

Some four years ago the *Sivananda Press* installed two Monophoto Mark 1V Filmsetters. The versatility of these machines enables setting to be done in Gujarati, Hindi, Sanskrit and English.

With the rapid advance made in the field of computer technology, the press found it necessary to replace one of the mechanical machines with the Monophoto 44-8. This new computerised typesetting system is much more versatile than its mechanical counterpart.

While the Mark 1V produces about 13,000 characters per hour, the 400-8 produces in excess of 40,000 in the same time. This means that an average book of 150 pages can be set in an 8-hour shift.

The main advantage of the new system, however, is that many functions are now carried out automatically. The program tapes contain the control data for all typesetting functions, including point sizes, line measures, and fixed and justification spaces. The time taken to load a program tape is under 30 seconds.

Corrections have always been the main stumbling block in filmsetting. This problem has now been overcome. The addition of a second Reader allows a correction tape to be merged with the original tape direct on to film or paper. The first run through the Filmsetter can produce a word numbered proof. After reading, a correction tape is cut which identifies the word number and either amends or inserts the corrections.

With the arrival of the Ace Edit the typesetting system is complete. This last equipment consists of a Reader, a Punch, a Visual Screen and a Proof-printer. The Visual Screen displays 21 lines of text which can be scrolled up or down like credit lines on a television screen. A cursor enables any character or word on the screen to be immediately identified for correction or amendment. The corrected or amended word is also immediately visible. After all editing, etc., have been completed, a clean tape is punched and further text can be made to appear on the screen for editing. Words, sentences and paragraphs can also be deleted or transposed.

Together with an updated punched tape a proof is also produced by the Proof-printer on inexpensive paper for further proofreading before actual filmsetting.

Because of all these added advantages the *Sivananda Press* is able to bring out much more reading matter than in the past.

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